THE ESSENTIAL 2014-15 PREVIEW

World Soccer®

GLOBAL FOOTBALL SINCE 1960

August 2014

30 EUROPEAN LEAGUES IN DEPTH

NEW SEASON

• SPECIAL •

RODRIGUEZ & SANCHEZ:

New clubs, new leagues, new challenges for World Cup stars

INCLUDING

- KEY DATES
- EXPERT PREDICTIONS
- EVERY TOP CLUB ANALYSED
- MAJOR SUMMER TRANSFERS

PLUS!

- Why Brazil re-hired Dunga
- Madrid's tactical dilemma
- Lazio 99
- Brian Glanville

Printed in the UK

£4.30

9 770043 903323 08

www.worldsoccer.com

SPORT TO THE PEOPLE

www.intersport.co.uk/predator

INTERSPORT

WorldSoccer
Global football intelligence since 1960

Contents

August 2014

SPECIAL FEATURE: BRAZIL

24 **Living in the past**
Dunga's reappointment highlights the problems facing Brazilian football

Dispatches

36

Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

32 **Argentina** why the domestic game is in transition
34 **Asia** time to address international shortcomings
35 **Cameroon** national coach will carry on
36 **USA** MLS continues to go from strength to strength
38 **French Guiana** using football for social change

THE WORLD THIS MONTH

People in the news...on and off the pitch

4 **In pictures**
8 **From the Editor**
13 **Paul Gardner** the worst-ever Final decision
14 **Keir Radnedge** FIFA's great survivor
16 **Ins & outs** players and coaches on the move
20 **Brian Glanville** Russia's World Cup

NEW SEASON IN EUROPE

Players to watch out for

40 **The summer's big transfers**

The top leagues previewed

48 **Austria**
49 **Belgium**
50 **Bulgaria**
51 **Czech Republic**
52 **Denmark**
54 **England**
58 **France**
62 **Germany**
66 **Greece**
67 **Holland**
68 **Italy**
72 **Poland**
73 **Portugal**
74 **Russia**
75 **Scotland**
76 **Spain**
81 **Switzerland**
82 **Turkey**
83 **Ukraine**

TACTICS

82 **Making it all fit at Real Madrid**

THE GREAT TEAMS

106 **Lazio 1999-2000**

13

40

67

82

World Service

The ultimate global news and results section

92 Internationals
94 Preview
100 Club results

Follow World Soccer online
FOOTBALL 24-7

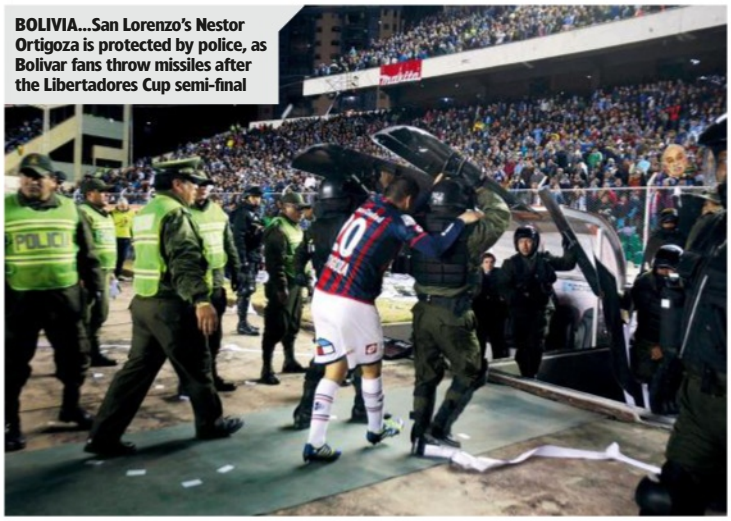
Follow @worldsoccermag Like World Soccer Magazine

SAVE MONEY ON WorldSoccer
Exclusive subscription offer.
See page 86.

In Pictures

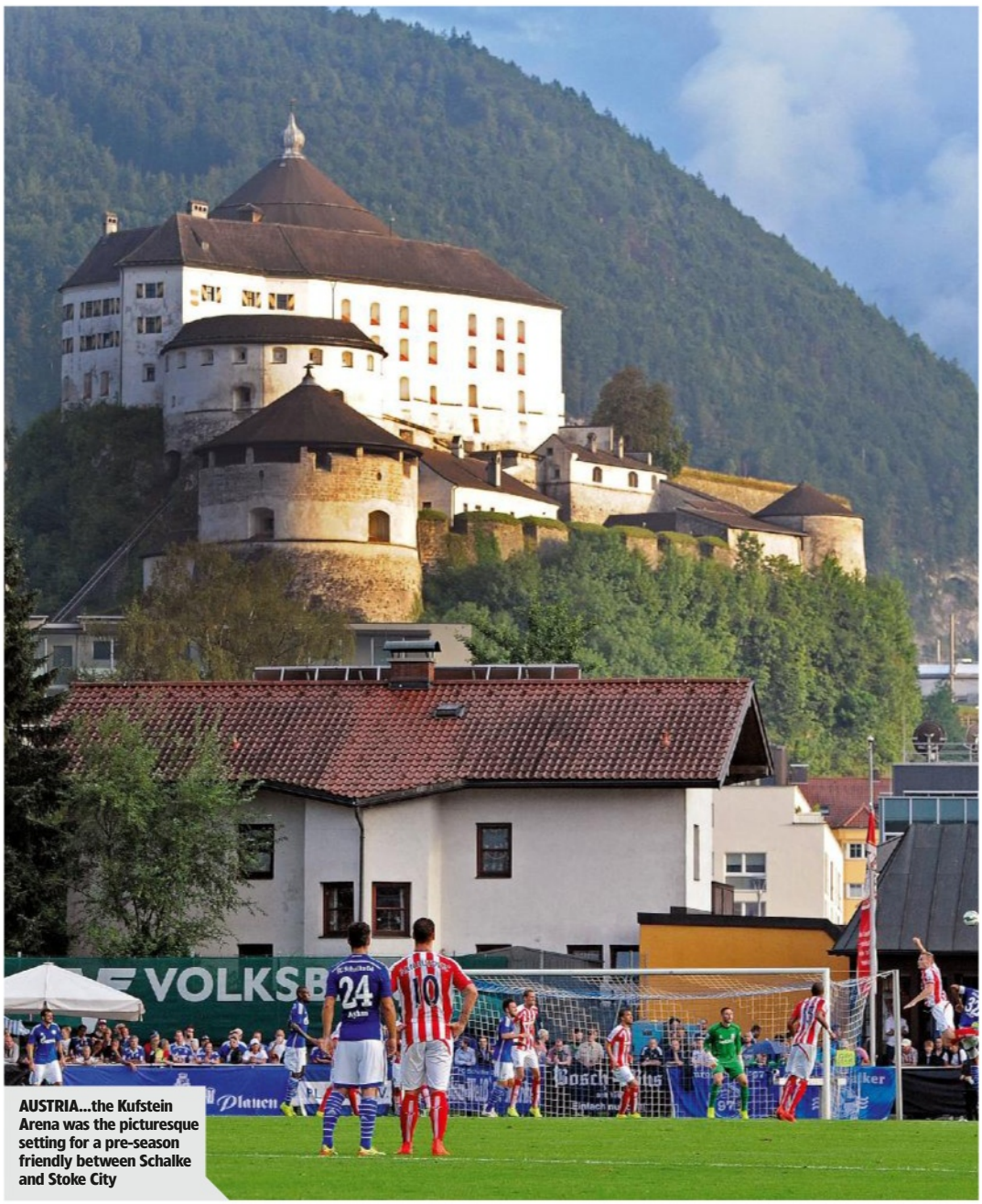
The global game caught on camera

BRAZIL...Ronaldinho takes a selfie with his Atletico Mineiro team-mates as they celebrate their Recopa Sudamericana victory over Lanus



BOLIVIA...San Lorenzo's Nestor Ortigoza is protected by police, as Bolivar fans throw missiles after the Libertadores Cup semi-final

USA...Joao Plata of Real Salt Lake rides a tackle from Vancouver Whitecaps' Gershon Koffie



AUSTRIA...the Kufstein Arena was the picturesque setting for a pre-season friendly between Schalke and Stoke City

ARGENTINA...a young fan reflects the gloom of a nation following defeat in the World Cup Final and the death of AFA president Julio Grondona

ITALY...Palermo players Abel Hernandez, Paulo Dybala and Franco Vazquez refresh themselves in a river following a pre-season training session

HOLLAND...Chelsea new boy Diego Costa (left) introduces himself to Vitesse's Guram Kashia

PICTURES OF THE MONTH QR CODE

To see more of the best photos from the month, scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also see the images by logging on to http://po.st/fMTOn7

FROM THE EDITOR

It has often been claimed that Europe's top clubs have such sophisticated scouting operations that they would never buy players purely on the back of their performances at a World Cup. Yet two of this summer's biggest transfers – our cover stars James Rodriguez and Alexis Sanchez, who were bought by Real Madrid and Arsenal respectively – added significant value to their already considerable price tags with impressive performances in Brazil.

> Both cover stars added to their already considerable price tags with impressive performances in Brazil

It would be tempting to devote this issue to a World Cup post-mortem, but the new European club season is upon us and a number of leagues will have already kicked off by the time you read this.

Instead, we have concentrated on Brazil's collapse – the most extraordinary story to emerge from the 2014 finals – and the controversial decision to reappoint Dunga as national coach. We will tackle some of the other countries as and when they appoint new coaches, starting with a preview of the Euro 2016 qualifying campaign next month.

See you then.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1 Argentina FA boss Julio Grondona dies, aged 82 ....pages 8, 14 and 32
2 Brazil reappoint Dunga as national coach ..... page 24
3 Real Madrid sign World Cup star James Rodriguez.....page 76
4 English clubs splash the cash..... page 56
5 Alejandro Sabella steps down as Argentina coach..... page 32
6 Xavi (Spain) and Philipp Lahm (Germany) announce their international retirements..... pages 9 and 17
7 Major League Soccer surpasses the NASL..... page 36
8 Asian World Cup post-mortems..... page 34
9 Germany win European Under-19 Championship ..... page 92
10 Italian FA president-elect in racism row ..... page 69

ARGENTINA

Grondona, last of the Latin autocrats

One by one the great Latin world dictators of sport have left the scene. Joao Havelange handed over the FIFA reins in 1998; athletics chief Primo Nebiolo died in 1999; former Olympic president Juan Antonio Samaranch died in 2010; and now so has Julio Grondona at 82.

Grondona was never president of a world federation, but he never needed the formality. In one of his many aphorisms he confided: "It's not so much that I have power, it's that other people believe I have power – and that's what counts."

Julio Humberto Grondona led the Argentinian game – both its football and commercial sectors – for 35 years, until his death following a heart attack. He was also senior vice-president of FIFA.

"Don Julio" was a man and an administrator of his era, having come to power under a military dictatorship. Parliamentary democracy may have returned to Argentina, but his leadership style and attitudes remained rooted in the autocratic era which empowered him.

Decision...Grondona had stated that he intended to retire next year

He had no time for critics, rivals, journalists or even his own country's succession of 15 political leaders – as entrenched president of the AFA he was beyond their reach. The length and breadth of his command was remarkable in the modern era for a man who, as one Argentinian newspaper noted, "knew barely two words of English and considered it beneath him to use even those".

However, even he had acknowledged that his control of the levers of power was coming to an end. Grondona was re-elected in January last year as AFA president but, having lost his wife as well as younger brother and close aide Hector in the previous 12 months, he had intended to retire in 2015.

Grondona was born in Avellaneda, Buenos Aires, on September 18, 1931. In 1956 he was a founder member of the Arsenal club of Sarandi, which served as his power base as its president from 1957 to 1976. He was then president for three years of world and South American champions

"As long as I have the support of those around me, I work with enthusiasm. Should that belief stop, don't worry, I'll go"

Russia coach Fabio Capello feels the heat of an under-par World Cup

Power...with 1978 World Cup coach Carlos Bilardo

Independiente. In 1979 he was picked to head the AFA by Carlos Lacoste, the army strongman who headed the organisation of the 1978 World Cup finals which Argentina had won. He became a member of the FIFA executive committee in 1988.

Under Grondona's leadership Argentina won the World Cup in 1986, finished runners-up twice and won five world youth cups, as well as Olympic gold in both 2004 and 2008.

As finance chairman of FIFA he was also one of the few men happy with the revenue which accrued from the decision to run bidding for the 2018 and 2022 World Cup simultaneously.

He was no friend of British football for reasons deriving from both his close ties to the military junta of the 1970s and the early 1980s, and the outcome of the Falklands/Malvinas "adventure". Probably the only feature of the FIFA reform process of which he approved was the removal of the British vice-presidency.

Reform leader Mark Pieth made little secret of the obstructive behaviour of the Spanish-language clique within the ExCo, where Grondona created a formidable liaison with Spanish federation president Angel Maria Villar. That led, early this year, to a failed attempt within the ExCo to scrap the ethics investigation into the 2018 and 2022 World Cup bids.

Critics seeking to uncover the secret of his wealth were told it was all down to his development of the family ironmongery business. But an investigation in 2011 led to claims of millions of dollars stashed in bank accounts in Argentina, Spain, the US and Switzerland. Access to these accounts was vested in Grondona, his son Humberto, his wife Nelida and brother Hector. With the last two pre-deceasing him, nothing ever came of the investigation.

As Grondona once said: "I have been accused of more crimes than Al Capone, but no one ever proved anything."

Keir Radnedge

HEROES & VILLAINS

MESUT OZIL

The German midfielder opted to donate his bonus of £350,000 for winning the World Cup to the children of Gaza.

Generous...Ozil

DAVID LAFATA

The Sparta Prague forward scored five of the seven goals that his Czech club put past Levadia of Estonia in the first leg of their Champions League tie.

XAVI

After 133 caps for Spain, the 34-year-old Barcelona midfielder has retired from international football. A World Cup winner in 2010, he also helped his country to win the European Championship in 2008 and 2012.

KAKA

Eleven years after last appearing in a Sao Paulo shirt, the former World Cup winner scored a debut goal on his return to the club. However, despite his 76th-minute strike against Goias, his side still lost 2-1.

On target...Kaka scored on his return to Sao Paulo

SEYDOU KEITA & PEPE

Keita of Roma refused to shake hands with the Real Madrid defender at the start of a pre-season friendly and then threw a water bottle at his head. For his part, Pepe was seen by the fourth official allegedly spitting at Keita. The two players have history dating back to the Spanish Super Cup in 2011 when Keita accused Pepe of calling him a monkey.

Jailed...Pele's Edinho is serving 33 years in prison

EDINHO

The 43-year-old son of Pele, who once played in goal for his father's former club Santos, was sentenced to 33 years in jail for money laundering.

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN FANS

The French club were ordered to close two sections of their home ground for their next Champions League game after supporters abused disabled Chelsea fans in April.

Off...City's friendly with Rijeka was abandoned

HNK RIJEKA

A pre-season friendly against Manchester City under-21 side was abandoned when City walked off after their French midfielder Seko Fofana was alleged racially abused by one of the Croatian team's players.

"I'm not a smoker who goes through a packet of cigarettes a day. I don't smoke every day. What counts is what happens on the pitch"

New Barcelona defender Jeremy Mathieu tells reporters that he doesn't have a nicotine problem

GOALS we'd like to see again

To see video footage of these goals, and many more that we have selected, scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also see the videos by logging on to http://po.st/lnNVly

1 CARLOS LOBATON
Sporting Cristal v San Simon
Sweetly struck first-time shot from just inside the opposition half that sailed over the keeper's head.

2 ALEJANDRO DOMINGUEZ
Olympiakos v Milan
Dominguez started the move just inside the Milan half and then finished it, having controlled a cross on his chest, with a volley low into the net.

3 ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI
Bayern Munich v Borussia Monchengladbach
In a pre-season friendly, Bayern's new striker scored with a cheeky lob over the Monchengladbach goalkeeper.

4 WAYNE ROONEY
Manchester United v Roma
A brilliant shot on the turn from 30 yards that flew into the far top corner.

5 GUSTAVO RAMIREZ
Mineros de Zacatecas v Necaxa
The fastest-ever goal in the Mexican league, scored from just inside the opponent's half direct from kick-off after four seconds.

6 FRANCESCO TOTTI
Roma v Real Madrid
Totti dummied Seydou Keita's pass, allowing it to run on to Alessandro Florenzi, whose subsequent cross was then swept home by the veteran.

WINNERS

MANCHESTER UNITED
Their new kit deal with Adidas, starting in the 2015-16 season, is worth a world record minimum of £750m over 10 years.

ATLETICO MINEIRO
Added the Recopa Sudamericana to the Libertadores Cup they won last year with a 5-3 aggregate win over Lanus.

NACIONAL & SAN LORENZO
Both clubs reached the Final of the Libertadores Cup for the first time.

LANUS
Two extra-time own goals, from Gustavo Gomez and Victor Ayala, condemned the Argentinian club to defeat in the Recopa Sudamericana.

DOM DWYER
Sporting Kansas City's English-born striker was booked for celebrating his goal against Chicago Fire by taking a selfie with his team-mate Soony Saad in front of fans.

SOUTHAMPTON FANS
Watched in horror as Lambert, Lallana, Lovren, Shaw and co were shipped out during the summer.

LOSERS

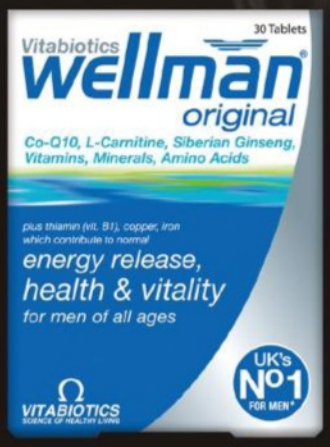
wellman®

advanced nutrition just for men

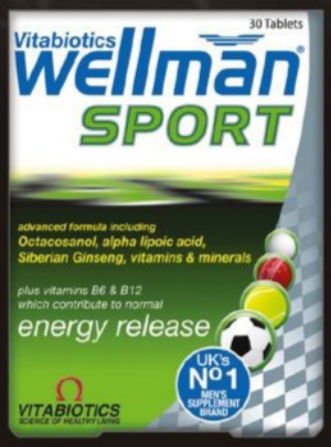
Wellman® - ready to take on the world

Wellman® **is an advanced range of nutritional products, tailored to the specific requirements of men.**

So whether you are playing or watching from the side lines, why not see what it can do for you?



Original



Sport

50+

UK's No1 MEN*

From Boots, Superdrug, supermarkets, Holland & Barrett, pharmacies & health stores

www.wellman.co.uk

*UK's No1 men's supplement brand.
†(IRI value data.52 w/e 22nd Feb 2014).

Britain's No.1† supplements

QUEEN'S AWARD FOR ENTERPRISE IN INNOVATION IN VITAMIN RESEARCH

VITABIOTICS
SCIENCE OF HEALTHY LIVING

ADWELCONWCP 12-06-14E

"I asked for three or four top players so we could continue to grow, but the president saw it differently"

Ex-Monaco coach Claudio Ranieri suggests that the club's owner, Dmitry Rybolovlev, is growing tired of his project

REPORTS we couldn't make up

1 One hundred years after Exeter City were invited to Brazil to play a Sao Paulo/Rio de Janeiro select XI – which was recognised as Brazil's first-ever international match – the club from the fourth tier of English football returned to Rio to play a commemorative game against a Fluminense under-23 side.

Exeter lost the original 1914 match 2-0, but this time the two teams played out a goalless draw, although the English club had two efforts ruled out for offside.

Exeter captain Scot Bennett said afterwards: "It's a massive honour to come over here and win the trophy. It's a very different pre-season from the ones we're used to. Usually we only play local sides."

Centenary party...Exeter City (in red) take on a Fluminese under-23 side

2 Kit madness descended on the lower divisions in Spain this pre-season. It should come as no surprise that third-division club Cultural Leonesa unveiled a bizarre kit for the new campaign. Two years ago, they wore a shirt that was covered in images of the green vegetable broccoli.

This season, thanks to Danish kit manufacturer Hummel, Cultural will be wearing a kit that is more suited to a wine bar than a football pitch. The main design of the shirt resembles a white tuxedo and black bow tie.

Elsewhere in Spain, Lugo from the second division unveiled a home kit that depicts a glass of beer and an away kit with a giant octopus tentacle on it.

Putting on the Ritz... Cultural Leonesa's bizarre new kit

3 Former England captain David Beckham and his sons Romeo and Cruz got more than they bargained for at the recent Nickelodeon Kids Choice Sports Awards at UCLA's Pauley Pavilion in Los Angeles.

It is traditional at the awards ceremony that the celebrities who receive their gongs get covered in slimy green gunge.

However, in light of his "Golden Balls" nickname, Beckham and his offspring were showered in gold when the now retired footballer arrived on stage to receive his Legend award.

Gold is the colour... Beckham and sons get a drenching

OBITUARIES

JULIO CESAR ABBADIE (1930-2014)
Uruguayan centre-forward who won the Intercontinental Cup and Libertadores Cup with Penarol in 1966. Scored 14 goals in 26 internationals, including two against Scotland in the 1954 World Cup.

Chequered World Cup...Troche

HORACIO TROCHE (1935-2014)
Captained Uruguay at 1962 and 1966 World Cups. Sent off in quarter-finals of the latter for kicking Germany's Lothar Emmerich in the stomach, he slapped Uwe Seeler in the face as he left pitch.

High office...Taylor

DAVID TAYLOR (1954-2014)
The former Scottish FA chief executive and UEFA general secretary, died following a heart attack, aged 60.

VALENTIN BELKEVICH (1973-2014)
One of Belarus' greatest players died aged 41. Belkevich began his career at local club Dinamo Minsk, where he won four League title and was voted Belarussian footballer of the year. He went on to win seven Ukrainian league titles with Dynamo Kiev and played in the side that reached 1999 Champions League semi-finals.

Belarus hero...Belkevich

Paul GARDNER

THE WORLDWIDE VIEW

No excuse to ignore Neuer's Final thuggery

Terrible decision...the referee awarded a free-kick against Argentina's Higuain (in blue) after this assault by Germany keeper Neuer

In this summer's World Cup, four games were decided by a penalty shoot-out. Seven goalkeepers were involved and none of them indulged in the forward-movement cheating that had made such a farce of this year's Europa League Final.

Even so, the keepers' good spot-kick behaviour was blemished by the blatant gamesmanship of Holland's Tim Krul, who wandered insolently around near the penalty spot as Costa Rica were trying to set up their kicks. Why did referee Ravshan Irmatov of Uzbekistan not order him to get over to the goal line, where he belonged?

The question brings us to the Final and a refereeing decision made by Italy's Nicola Rizzoli.

A terrible decision - the worst I've ever seen in a World Cup Final. A decision that, just like Irmatov's tolerance of Krul's interference, allowed a goalkeeper to get away with actions that should have been punished. Germany's Manuel Neuer was the goalkeeper in question – and the man who won the Golden Glove award in Brazil and was hailed by FIFA's website for his "ability to dominate his penalty area" and for "fulfilling a dual-function as a goalkeeper-cum-sweeper".

There was no mention of thuggery, but that's what we got from Neuer in the 56th minute when, running at full speed, he jumped into Argentina's Gonzalo Higuain.

Not surprisingly, Higuain was flattened. Neuer had gone in with his right knee raised and he had jumped high enough for that battering-ram of a knee to smash into Higuain's head.

> The refereeing decision by Italy's Nicola Rizzoli was the worst I've ever seen in a World Cup Final

Rizzoli, who was well placed, whistled immediately and signalled a free-kick for Germany. Absolutely, downright incredible. Higuain, with his back to Neuer, was attempting to bring the ball under control. He made no movement of any sort towards the onrushing Neuer.

The correct call here, without the slightest doubt, was a red card to Neuer – for serious foul play, using excessive force, endangering the safety of an opponent – and a penalty kick.

Rizzoli's call, a foul by Higuain, was laughable. He later admitted to *Gazzetta dello Sport* that he made a mistake with that part of the call. He said there was no foul because Neuer "got to the ball first".

But the only reason Neuer was first to the ball – he punched it away – was because he brutally bulldozed Higuain out of the way.

A flying leap into a player, a knee to the head – and Rizzoli tells us that is acceptable play? Well, sort of. I think he's saying it's OK for goalkeepers to do that. An outfield player, running several yards before launching himself, knee first, into an opponent, would surely be punished.

Making this brutal foul a lot worse was Rizzoli's – not to mention Neuer's – blithe disregard of the now significant concussion dangers, something FIFA ought to be much concerned with.

This is not intended as a replay of the Final. Even if Argentina got the correct call, penalties have been missed, and anyway Germany may well have been capable of winning with 10 men.

The point is to bring about a rethink by referees in their lax and lenient attitude to fouling by goalkeepers. Rizzoli's Rule – that it's OK for a goalkeeper to jump violently into a player and smash his knee into the opponent's head – comes from the top, from the guy who is arguably the sport's leading referee. It carries authority.

But it is deadly wrong. It needs to be quickly and publicly disowned by the refereeing authorities. Either that or we're on a countdown to a reprise of the ugly 1982 assault by Harald Schumacher on Patrick Battiston. WS

Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

Grondona's death leaves Hayatou as FIFA's great survivor

Senior...following the death of Grondona (right), Hayatou is now the longest serving member of FIFA's ExCo

A 68-year-old who commutes regularly between a home in Paris and his business in Africa – defying diabetes – is one heartbeat away from the presidency of FIFA.

The death in late July of Argentina's "Don Julio" Grondona has elevated Issa Hayatou to the role of senior vice-president of the world federation by virtue of unbroken membership of the executive committee since 1990. Just for the record, behind Hayatou in the vice-presidential pecking order at FIFA come Spain's Angel Maria Villar (1998) and UEFA president Michel Platini (2002).

Hayatou, from the most powerful family in Cameroon, has been president of the African confederation since 1988. He even tightened his grip last year by rewriting the statutes to narrow down the potential for election attack (most notably to shut out Jacques Anouma).

Supporters of Hayatou acclaim him for achieving a minor miracle in progressing an African football constituency which had been notorious for corruption and managerial incompetence. The African Nations Cup has expanded from eight to 24 finalists, a mini-league-format Champions League has evolved and the continent now has five nations guaranteed a presence at the World Cup finals instead of two.

But critics of Hayatou claim that he is autocratic, secretive, media-unfriendly and concerned only to maintain a powerbase without caring for the appalling image of the African game – illustrated by the tediously repetitive pay rows at the World Cup, with Cameroon, Ghana and Nigeria this latest time around in Brazil.

Hayatou is also the one survivor in the FIFA hierarchy from among those known to have been tarnished by the ISL scandal.

Joao Havelange, Ricardo Teixeira and Nicolas Leoz – who were all proven beneficiaries of illicit commissions – have since departed the scene. Hayatou himself has never been sanctioned by FIFA for taking ISL cash but he was rapped over the knuckles for it by the International Olympic Committee (of which he is also a member) in December 2011.

After his name emerged from the ISL files, Hayatou told the IOC ethics panel that he received 100,000 Swiss francs ($107,000) in cash from ISL in 1995 to help finance the 40th anniversary of CAF. The handout was not "personal", he had not been an IOC member at the time and, as such, was handed a simple "reprimand".

> Hayatou is the one survivor in the FIFA hierarchy from among those known to have been tarnished by the ISL scandal

To the expressed irritation of CAF (and clearly of Hayatou), the IOC noted that the documents he provided in his own defence "do not provide assurance that the funds were actually transferred into the accounts of CAF." Hence: "Personally accepting such a sum of money in these circumstances constitutes a conflict of interest."

For all the criticism which rained upon Grondona, he was never caught with his hands in the football till in this manner. Also, no accusations of corruption ever threatened him as they did the likes of Jack Warner and Mohammed Bin Hammam. Grondona was there before them and he remained in place and immovable long after they had all departed in disgrace. Grondona had, in fact, once prophesied: "They will only take me out of the AFA feet first."

Grondona was not only vice-president of FIFA but its finance committee president and one of the few men delighted with the riches engendered by the controversial decision to run the 2018 and 2022 World Cup bidding processes simultaneously. He and Hayatou were allies in resisting the reform process led by Basle governance expert Mark Pieth.

So, no change in attitudes at the top of FIFA then.

However, Hayatou's elevation may make a few people – apart from already declared Jerome Champagne – ponder what the future holds for the world federation.

Sepp Blatter, while not wishing to say anything which may alert a new election regulations sub-committee, is clearly determined to seek and gain a further four-year term next year.

Without wishing in any way to be morbid about this, should Blatter – in the words of Article 30 of FIFA statutes – become "permanently or temporarily prevented from performing his official function" then the "longest-serving vice-president shall represent him until the next Congress.

"This Congress shall elect a new president, if necessary."

That, now, could be Hayatou, any time from now or over the next five years. No wonder the sound of shuffling feet can be heard behind him within CAF. Mohamed Raouraoua, the Algerian member of the FIFA ExCo, has already rushed to deny that he would run against Hayatou for the CAF presidency next year. So why even deny it?

Perhaps Raouraoua is positioning himself in case a vacancy should arise. One way or another. WS

DREAMING of a CAREER in SOCCER?

SPORTS MANAGEMENT WORLDWIDE

For more information:
SMWW.com
USA: +1 503 445 7105
UK: +44 (0)20 8767 0067

Earn college credit or a Masters or Doctorate with these courses.

Start or Advance your Career in:

- Scouting
- Sports Agent
- Broadcasting
- Game Operations
- Coaching
- Digital Video Editing
- Player Personnel
- Marketing
- Management
- Front Office

8-week online interactive training courses led by experts in the English Premier League, Football League and Conference including John Print – FIFA Agent, Steve Simmons - Aston Villa European Scout, Bob Langford - EPL Scout, Matt Martin – Sporting KC and Tim Regan – US Soccer Federation Scout and former Chief Scout of Toronto FC.

Learn the skills, strategies and techniques to advance to the front of the hiring line in sports marketing, soccer agency and professional soccer leagues including the EPL, La Liga, Serie A, Ligue 1, Bundesliga, Eredivise, J-League, A-League and MLS.

"Real Madrid sign few, but usually they are the right ones"

Ex-Real striker Hugo Sanchez gives his seal of approval to the recent arrival of James Rodriguez and Toni Kroos

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

IN

EUROPE

Greece appointed **CLAUDIO RANIERI** to succeed Fernando Santos as national coach. **DICK ADVOCAAT** made Serbia his sixth national-team job, having previously coached Holland, UAE, South Korea, Belgium and Russia.

Sixth sense...Advocaat

Holland Under-21 coach **ALBERT STUIVENBERG** linked up with fellow countryman Louis Van Gaal at Manchester United. Former United and Real Madrid striker **RUUD VAN NISTELROOY** joined new Holland boss Guus Hiddink's backroom staff as one of his assistants.

FERNANDO HIERRO, who made 601 appearances for Real Madrid and won the Champions League three times, returned to the club as assistant coach. He replaces **ZINEDINE ZIDANE**, who has taken charge of Real's B side, Castilla.

Ex-Argentina striker **HERNAN CRESPO** was named Parma youth coach.

Striker **ROSS McCORMACK** joined Fulham from Leeds United for £11 million – a record signing for a team in the English second tier.

Former Czech Republic coach **MICHAL BILEK** took charge of defending Georgian champions Dinamo Tbilisi.

VLADIMIR GAZZAEV, who is the son of former CSKA Moscow boss Valery Gazzaev, replaced Vladimir Nikitenko as coach of the reigning Kazakhstan Premier League champions, Aktobe.

Former international striker **VIOREL MOLDOVAN**, who led Rapid Bucharest back to the Romanian top flight last season, was appointed coach of the national under-21 side.

SOUTH AMERICA

Brazil's 1994 World Cup-winning captain **DUNGA** was reappointed national coach following the departure of **LUIZ FELIPE SCOLARI**, who took charge of Gremio for the third time. Another former Brazil boss, **VANDERLEI LUXEMBURGO**, was appointed coach of Flamengo for a fourth time, replacing Ney Franco, who was sacked with the side bottom of the league.

Former Brazil international **KAKA** returned to his first club, Sao Paulo, on loan after having his contract with Milan terminated by mutual consent. The 32-year-old playmaker will join new MLS club Orlando City in January.

Brazilian-born Croatia striker **EDUARDO**, who quit international football after the World Cup, joined Flamengo in his homeland after leaving Shakhtar Donetsk of Ukraine.

Days after joining Nacional from Libertad, striker **BRIAN MONTENEGRO** scored for the Paraguayan side in their 2-0 first-leg victory over Defensor of Uruguay in the Liberatdores Cup semi-finals.

Winning start...Montenegro

SIXTO VIZUETE was put in charge of Ecuador's national side until January. He replaces Reinaldo Rueda who was sacked after the World Cup. **NOEL SANVICENTE** was appointed coach of Venezuela, the only South American nation never to have played at the finals.

JORGE ALMIRON replaced Omar De Felippe as coach of Independiente, who were promoted back to the Argentinian top flight in June.

Argentinian side Belgrano signed Honduras' World Cup striker **JERRY BENGTSON** on loan from New England Revolution.

CONCACAF

One-time Costa Rica coach **HERNAN MEDFORD** replaced Luis Fernando Suarez in charge of Honduras.

DAMARCUS BEASLEY, who this summer became the first USA player to have competed at four World Cups, joined Houston Dynamo from Mexican side Puebla.

Ecuador's World Cup midfielder **MICHAEL ARROYO** joined America from Atlante prior to the start of the new Mexican apertura campaign.

AFRICA

Frenchman **CHRISTIAN GOURCUFF** took charge of Algeria, while **EPHRAIM "SHAKES" MASHABA** replaced Gordon Igesund as boss of South Africa and former Portugal defender **JORGE COSTA** was appointed coach of Gabon, replacing compatriot Paulo Duarte.

HOSSAM HASSAN was named coach of Zamalek, who dismissed Mido one week after he had led the team to victory in the Egyptian Cup.

Spanish coach **JUAN CARLOS GARRIDO**, who was sacked by Real Betis in January, took charge of Al Ahly after they claimed their 37th Egyptian league championship.

ASIA

Former Mexico boss **JAVIER AGUIRRE**, who left Spanish side Espanyol in May, replaced Alberto Zaccheroni as coach of Japan.

New boss...Aguirre

Elephants turn to Renard

HERVE RENARD, who led Zambia to the 2012 African Nations Cup title, has taken over as national coach of Ivory Coast.

The 45-year-old Frenchman succeeded Sabri Lamouchi, who stepped down after the "Elephants" failed to progress from their World Cup group.

"I'm neither Al Capone nor Hitler"

After resigning from his post as national coach of Costa Rica, Jorge Luis Pinto defends himself against the charge that he lacks man-management skills

Transfers, sackings and loans

Dane **MICHAEL LAUDRUP**, who had been out of work since being sacked by Swansea City in February, was appointed coach of reigning Qatari champions Lekhwiya.

Algeria defender **RAFIK HALLICHE** joined Qatar Sports Club after the World Cup when his contract with Portugal's Academica ended. Former Italy striker **ALBERTO GILARDINO** joined 2013 AFC Champions League winners Guangzhou Evergrande of China from Genoa. He replaced Brazilian **MURIQUI**, who was sold to Al Sadd of Qatar for $9million.

AFC Champions League quarter-finalists Al Ain of UAE signed Slovakian international winger **MIROSLAV STOCH** on a one-year loan deal from Turkish side Fenerbahce.

Montenegro striker **MIRKO VUCINIC** joined UAE side Al Jazira from Juventus, where he won three consecutive Serie A titles.

Ex-Liverpool winger **LUIS GARCIA**, who was a Champions League winner in 2005, came out of retirement to join Atletico de Kolkata for the maiden season of the Indian Super League.

Former Spain keeper **JOSE MOLINA**, who played at the 1998 World Cup, took charge of Hong Kong champions Kitchee ahead of their AFC Cup quarter-final against Vissai Ninh Binh of Vietnam.

Ex-international striker **DOLLAH SALLEH** was named coach of Malaysia.

Sydney signed Austria captain **MARC JANKO** from Trabzonspor of Turkey as their international marquee player to replace Alessandro Del Piero.

EUROPE

England captain **STEPHEN GERRARD**, Croatia goalkeeper **STIPE PLETIKOSA** and Republic of Ireland defender **RICHARD DUNNE** all retired from international football.

Former Italy and Milan boss **ARRIGO SACCHI** left his role as technical coordinator of youth development with the Italian Football Federation.

Genk sacked coach **EMILIO FERRERA** just one game into the new Belgian season after they lost 3-1 at Mechelen in their opening league game.

Rosenborg dismissed coach **PER JOAR HANSEN** despite the team sitting second in the Norwegian league.

SOUTH AMERICA

ALEJANDRO SABELLA, who steered Argentina to the World Cup Final, quit as national team coach.

Brazil centre-forward **FRED**, who was widely criticised for his performances during the World Cup, announced his retirement from international football, as did Chile midfielder **JORGE VALDIVIA**, who played one game at the tournament.

Former Barcelona, Milan and Paris Saint-Germain striker **RONALDINHO**, 34, left Atletico Mineiro after three seasons with the Brazilian side.

Moving on...Ronaldinho

CONCACAF

JORGE LUIS PINTO parted company with Costa Rica, having led the side to the World Cup quarter-finals.

has retired from playing at the age of 35. Capped 127 times by Iran, he scored 38 international goals and represented his country at the 2006 World Cup.

OUT

Meteoric rise...DeMerit went from non-league Southall to the World Cup

Vancouver Whitecaps defender **JAY DEMERIT**, who rose from the ninth tier of English football to play in the World Cup, has retired. The 34-year-old started out with Southall in the Combined Counties Football League and went on to win 25 caps for his country, starting all four games in South Africa in 2010.

ASIA

Sudanese side Al Hilal sacked coach **PAULO CAMPOS** after he ran onto the pitch and had to be restrained by police following a last-minute penalty that saw his side beaten 2-1 by AS Vita of DR Congo in the CAF Champions League.

Tractor Sazi's former Bayern Munich midfielder **ALI KARIMI**

Lahm calls time on Germany

Bayern Munich's **PHILIPP LAHM** announced his retirement from international football after captaining Germany to victory in the World Cup this summer.

FREE iD Make them

FREE Football Boot Personalisation on

Lovell soccer

FREE UK DELIVERY

On all orders over £100 at Lovell Soccer

WWW.LOVELLSOCCER.CO.UK

your own for FREE

ALL Boots at www.lovellsoccer.co.uk

Freephone 0800 804 8521 | sales@lovellsoccer.co.uk

facebook.com/lovellsoccer twitter.com/lovellsoccer

Lovell soccer

Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

Russia's World Cup victory deserves greater scrutiny

Nick Clegg, who can seldom see a bandwagon without jumping on it, has said that because of the appalling Ukrainian disaster of the shot-down Malaysian aircraft, Russia should be banned from staging the 2018 World Cup. David Cameron disagrees with him.

I would, and have been since the award was made, be delighted to see the World Cup taken away from Russia; not because of the crash, appalling and horrific though it was, but because they never should have been given it in the first place. This because, at a time when FIFA is still supposed to be promulgating a policy of kicking out racism, Russian football is rife with it.

Numerous examples have been cited before, not least from Saint Petersburg and Moscow. It made no difference when the vote was taken. Russia romped through while England, who had such a strong case for preference, got but a single vote beside their own.

Andy Anson, the hapless fellow in charge of England's bid, whinged that *Panorama* had spoiled it all by running a programme before the vote investigating corruption in FIFA. As if it made any difference. In the event, the FA spent huge sums of money in trying to influence voters, over £30,000 of which, it has recently been said, went to a function in Trinidad involving one of the worst miscreants of all, now blessedly if belatedly cast out – the egregious Jack Warner, who would be courted not only by Cameron, all unknowing, but also by Prince William.

> "I would be delighted to see the World Cup taken away from Russia; not because of the crash, appalling and horrific though it was, but because they never should have been given it in the first place"

That devastating *Sunday Times* investigation has shown us how Qatar, with not a single rational argument in its favour, and so many against, bought the 2022 World Cup. It is pretty plain that there was much dirty work at the crossroads to ensure Russia's success.

Will it be taken away? We await the murky revelations which tell us how they succeeded. But Qatar comes first.

Talks...FIFA president Blatter (left) meets Russian president Vladimir Putin before signing over the hosting rights for the 2018 World Cup

Below par...a subdued Messi is crowded out by Germany defenders in the World Cup Final

Don't hold your breath for Garcia to rescue FIFA

At the time of writing, the football world awaits the report from the American lawyer Michael Garcia, deputed to investigate how Qatar acquired the World Cup. I for one am not waiting with bated breath. Ludicrously, at the instigation of an evidently troubled FIFA, he feebly agreed to conclude his report before the 2014 World Cup finals began, FIFA ostensibly not wanting the result to impinge on the spectacular jamboree.

How Garcia could acquiesce when, well before a ball was kicked, the *Sunday Times* came out with its damning revelations, ask me not. It was hardly encouraging to read the view of a professor of law at Columbia University that Garcia's inquiries had a habit of coming out in favour of whoever had engaged him.

Meanwhile, he has embarrassingly, even shockingly, flushed none other than Franz Beckenbauer from cover. It was alleged with chapter and verse that "*Der Kaiser*", long seen as the very emblem of international football, had accepted hospitality both in Qatar and in Europe on several occasions from the arch conspirator Bin Hammam, the Mr Fixit of Qatar's bid.

Does any hope lie at the bottom of this Pandora's box? Any in England; and the Football Association? Hard to discern it. Greg Dyke, alas, comes across as a mere blowhard, all too pungently displayed when, as England's draw for the World Cup in Brazil was announced, he drew, as we know, his finger across his throat.

Now he is at it again at the FA, the deluded champion of positive discrimination. Now he tells us that the FA council is "overwhelmingly male, overwhelming white and overwhelmingly irrelevant." Now every councillor, Heaven help us and them, will be obliged to take something called "equality training."

Yes, I think I know what that means and in essence it is meaningless. How do you even begin to define it? In the vernacular, bullshine baffles brains and Dyke is full of it.

I am no great admirer of the FA, which has lacked decent leadership since the admittedly autocratic Stanley Rous departed to become president of FIFA (till Havelange shafted him) in 1962. Personally I wouldn't care if the council consisted entirely of black women, provided they were up the job. Meanwhile, one has to say that such half-baked ideas are hideously Greg Dyke.

Under a cloud... Beckenbauer faced questions from Michael Garcia

Germany in Brazil: good but not great

Now that the smoke has cleared from the 2014 World Cup, not least from the sensational collapse of Brazil against Germany, perhaps it is time to try to get things in perspective.

In the first instance, were Germany, despite that amazing 7-1 thrashing of Brazil, a truly great team? Very good indeed they surely were, well deserving too of ultimate success, but great? Like the Brazilians of 1970?

Look at their results overall, not least in the Final against Argentina, and I believe certain doubts arise, for the Germans' passage to the Final was hardly idyllic. That they deserved to win overall is undeniable, but in the words of the Duke of Wellington it was a damn close-run thing. After all, against an Argentina team in which Lionel Messi, its one true star and one real hope, was so palpably below par, the match went all the way to extra time and trembled on the verge of penalties, however dazzling the goal by Mario Gotze which eventually won it.

Miroslav Klose equalised against Ghana very late in the group game. The USA were beaten only by a single goal. Ditto the French, who could have equalised near the end were it not for a majestic one-handed save by Manuel Neuer.

There has long been a tendency to assume that certain teams from various countries have got it right, only for such teams to wax and wane.

In 1953, when Hungary, helped by Walter Winterbottom's suicidal tactics, walked all over England at Wembley, a book came out called *Learn To Play The Hungarian Way*. Ignored or forgotten was the fact that just a fortnight before England's debacle, little George Raynor that ebullient Yorkshireman had taken his depleted Sweden team to Budapest and gained a 2-2 draw. By the World Cup of 1958, Hungary's major stars, Puskas and co, had either left the country or aged. That Hungary team largely kicked people, notably Wales' mighty John Charles. Had he been able to play against Brazil in that quarter-final with inviting early crosses coming into the box, who knows what might have happened.

Latterly, in the early and middle 1970s, we have had the transient glories of "Total Football", as practised so brilliantly by the Dutch and West Germans, Johan Cruyff and Franz Beckenbauer to the fore. This was the new coruscating reality, but it didn't last. Nor for that matter did the 4-2-4 system introduced to football by Brazil in the 1958 World Cup.

So it goes; endlessly. **WS**

● Read Brian Glanville's exclusive online column at worldsoccer.com

WWW.UKSOCCERSHOP.COM
INFO@UKSOCCERSHOP.COM : 0844 332 1221

UKSOCCERSHOP
NUMBER ONE FOR FOOTBALL SHIRTS

SHIRT PRINTING
Customise this season's new shirts from Barcelona, Real Madrid, Bayern, England, Ajax, Catalunya and more in the latest printing styles!

NEXT DAY DELIVERY
DHL NEXT DAY DELIVERY TO UK, EUROPE AND USA. REST OF THE WORLD: 2/3 DAYS. FULLY TRACKABLE SHIPPING TO EVERY COUNTRY!

NEW 2014 WORLD CUP SHIRTS NOW AVAILABLE!

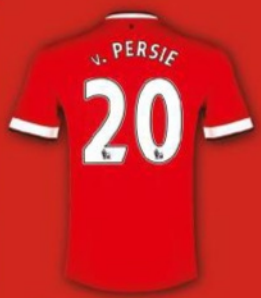
PSG 14-15
(IBRAHIMOVIC 10)
£75.00

DORTMUND 14-15
(REUS 11)
£65.00

14-15 INTER MILAN
HOME SHIRT
£64.99

14-15 JUVENTUS
HOME SHIRT
£64.99

14-15 ROMA
HOME SHIRT
£64.99



14-15 MAN UTD
(V.PERSIE 20)
£64.99

14-15 TOTTENHAM
HOME SHIRT
£54.99

14-15 GALATASARAY
HOME SHIRT
£64.99

14-15 ATLETICO MADRID
HOME SHIRT
£64.99

14-15 JUVENTUS
AWAY SHIRT
£64.99

ALL 32 WORLD CUP NATIONAL TEAM SHIRTS AVAILABLE!

UKSOCCERSHOP

NUMBER ONE FOR FOOTBALL SHIRTS

ASK US ABOUT OUR GROUNDBREAKING DEALS ON TEAM KIT& TRAINING WEAR TODAY!

TEAM WEAR

EXCLUSIVE WORLD CUP RANGES AVAILABLE TO BUY ONLINE

T-SHIRTS &HOODIES

NEW 14-15 CLUB SHIRTS ADDED DAILY!

14-15 AC MILAN
AWAY SHIRT
£54.99

CHELSEA 14-15
(DIEGO COSTA 19)
£65.00

ARSENAL T7
ANTHEM JACKET
£60.00

DORTMUND
TRAINING SHIRT
£30.00

14-15 ARSENAL
(ALEXIS 17)
£59.99

14-15 REAL MADRID
MINI KIT (JAMES 10)
£59.99

14-15 BARCELONA
MINI KIT (MESSI 10)
£49.99

14-15 ARSENAL
MINI KIT (ÖZIL 11)
£49.99

14-15 ATLETICO MADRID
WOVEN TRACKSUIT
£90.00

14-15 INTER MILAN
WOVEN TRACKSUIT
£90.00

WWW.UKSOCCERSHOP.COM

Living in the PAST

The reappointment of Dunga as Brazil's national coach has served only to highlight the problems facing Brazilian football.

By Tim Vickery

"Brazil have lost their style, which is very sad"

Former Argentina coach Cesar Luis Menotti

A couple of years ago, Brazil's sports minister Aldo Rebelo referred to the outcome of the 1950 World Cup, where the hosts were beaten by Uruguay in the final game, as "a tragedy". It left an obvious follow-up question. Rebelo is a member of the Communist Party, and as such is well acquainted with one of the most frequently quoted observations of Karl Marx, that "history repeats itself; first as tragedy, then as farce".

Might a comment on 19th-century French politics also apply to 20th- and 21st-century Brazilian football? If 1950 was a tragedy, did it automatically follow that 2014 would be a farce?

Rebelo smiled, recognising the quote, and said: "Not a chance." And while in terms of off-the-field organisation he may have been proved right – despite occasional problems, fears of World Cup chaos proved unfounded – in terms of the performance of the home side he could not have been more wrong.

The word "farce" hardly comes close to describing Brazil's semi-final collapse against Germany. The 7-1 massacre in Belo Horizonte is probably the most astonishing scoreline in World Cup history – made all the more extraordinary by the perception that, had they needed to, the Germans seemed capable of scoring many more.

But if that game was farcical, then the farce was just beginning.

Of course, Germany caught Brazil on a bad day, one on which the absence of suspended captain and defensive organiser Thiago Silva was clearly a factor. He, though, was back for the third-place play-off – when Brazil went down 3-0 to a Holland side which had previously played for over four hours without scoring a goal. And even before the injury to Neymar, Luiz Felipe Scolari's Brazil were losing friends even as they were winning games.

There was so little to enthuse about in such a limited side. Where once Brazil

beat opponents on the flow of the ball, now they were restricted to set-pieces and counter-attacks while they interrupted the flow of the opposition with repeated tactical fouling.

Brazilian football has taken this path since the mid-80s, when a consensus formed that the physical development of the game made old-fashioned passing football obsolete. But this philosophy itself now looks hopelessly dated in the light of the success of the Barcelona/Spain school and its influence on the Germans, who merrily passed their way through and around the Brazilian defence. Brazil, then, seem stuck in the worst of two worlds, with a supposed pragmatism that is no longer pragmatic.

This has been apparent for some time. After his Barcelona side brushed Santos aside with absurd ease on the way to a 4-0 win in the Final of the 2011 Club World Cup, Pep Guardiola stuck in the stiletto by commenting that his side passed the ball around the way that his grandfathers told him Brazil used to do. It led to a debate on the state of the Brazilian game – which lasted a couple of weeks before things went back to normal.

In the light of the German humiliation, the discussion flared up again. Influential ex-Argentina boss Cesar Luis Menotti, a one-time Santos player, reminded people "I've been insisting for years that Brazil was 'de-culturising' its football". He added: "Ever since their 1982 and 86 sides did not achieve the results they deserved, Brazil have lost their style, which is very sad."

Local journalist Andre Kfouri warmed to the theme, writing: "There is something more serious than looking foolish in front of a worldwide audience. It is turning our backs on our own identity.

"For some time now the Brazil team have looked at the ball with contempt and seen the pass as a superfluous accessory. For some time now the Brazil team has denied that which won it the admiration of the world.

> "For some time now the team has looked at the ball with contempt"
> Brazilian journalist Andre Kfouri

"How could we have been so stupid that we believed no longer playing football was the intelligent option?"

How to respond? One of the 1970 greats, Tostao, typically the wisest voice in the Brazilian game, argued: "The first thing we need to change is the concept of how to play football, which is complex. It can't be done quickly or just with one person, but it's the most urgent thing that has to change in Brazilian football."

A few days later, Tostao was declaring himself "perplexed and surprised" and admitting "I don't understand anything". His confusion was a response to the rushed decision to reappoint Dunga as national coach – a scarcely credible and seemingly farcical response to the events of this summer.

The 1994 World Cup-winning captain had first been appointed, with no previous coaching experience, eight years earlier, after the 2006 World Cup. The feeling then was he was a poor man's Scolari, stepping into the job because the genuine article was still busy in charge of Portugal.

Statistically, Dunga's four-year reign was by no means a disaster, and his team won the 2007 Copa America and the Confederations Cup two years later. But they were an unlikable lot. Dunga was a snarling anti-aesthete whose side were every bit as dated as Scolari's 2014 team,

You had to be there...the most incredible final scoreline in World Cup history

Powerless...the injured Neymar (centre) and his team-mates cut sorry figures on the bench

Condemnation... the Brazilian media went to town on the humiliation of the *Selecao*

SCOLARI FIRED...
and re-hired by Gremio

Luiz Felipe Scolari was one of only two World Cup bosses to be sacked following a this summer's finals.

Scolari was dismissed on the day after the World Cup Final, along with his assistants Carlos Alberto Parreira and Flavio Murtosa. The trio were reported to have received severance payments totalling more than £2million.

Scolari has since been reappointed by Gremio, the club where he made his name in the mid 1990s.

The only other coach to be sacked following a poor World Cup performance was Ecuador's Reinaldo Rueda. He was replaced by Sixto Vizuete on a short -term contract until January 2015.

QUIT

While Scolari and Rueda were sacked, another five coaches resigned before they lost their jobs. **Sabri Lamouchi** left his post with Ivory Coast, **Cesare Prandelli** quit as Italy boss, **Hong Myung-bo** stepped aside in South Korea, **Alberto Zaccheroni** accepted responsibility for Japan's poor World Cup performance and **Alejandro Sabella** announced his resignation two weeks after his Argentina side were beaten by Germany in the Final.

STEPPING DOWN

Another six stepped down at the end of their contracts. Holland's **Louis Van Gaal** left to take charge of Manchester United. **Vahid Halilhodzic** quit as boss of Algeria despite federation efforts to persuade him to stay. **Fernando Santos** left at the end of his contract with Greece, while Switzerland coach **Ottmar Hitzfeld** retired. Costa Rica's **Jorge Luis Pinto** resisted bids to keep him, while **Luis Humberto Suarez** failed to agree terms to remain with Honduras.

STAYING ON

A majority remain in their jobs. Some, such as Spain's **Vicente Del Bosque**, England's **Roy Hodgson** and Russia's **Fabio Capello**, retain the support of their respective federations despite poor results in Brazil. Relative newcomers such as **Ange Postecoglou** (Australia), **Jurgen Klinsmann** (USA) and **Miguel Herrera** (Mexico) strengthened their positions after better-than-expected performances. More established coaches – such as **Jorge Sampaoli** (Chile), **Didier Deschamps** (France), **Marc Wilmots** (Belgium) and **Joachim Low** (Germany) came out of the tournament with reputations enhanced. Others, such as **Niko Kovac** (Croatia), **Safet Susic** (Bosnia-Herzegovina) and **Paulo Bento** (Portugal) experienced more mixed results, but remain for the foreseeable future. **Carlos Queiroz** looked set to leave Iran but was persuaded to stay by the offer of a new contract.

UNCERTAINTY

The futures of a number of African coaches is in the balance. **Volke Finke** vowed to stay on with Cameroon despite the federation possibly looking elsewhere, while **Kwesi Appiah** was talking over a two-year deal with Ghana. **Stephen Keshi** appeared to resign as Nigeria boss then hinted he would like to stay. In South America, **Oscar Tabarez** had yet to negotiate a new deal with Uruguay, while **Jose Pekerman** was not sure whether to stay on with Colombia.

Prandelli

Suarez

Del Bosque

Keshi

Losing his cool...Dunga takes out his frustration on the dugout frame during Brazil's World Cup quarter-final defeat by Holland in 2010

Past glories...a mural depicting Brazil's World Cup-winning captains on the wall of a Rio de Janeiro home

all counter-attacks, set-pieces and tactical fouls – a shameful 37 in the 2007 Copa America final against Argentina.

Moreover, Dunga has always been fuelled by anger. He held the World Cup aloft 20 years ago, not in celebration but in a spirit of revenge, spitting out abuse at those who had doubted him or the team. Such an emotional approach is one thing in a player, even the captain – it is another entirely in the coach. During the course of the 2010 World Cup he was giving signs of being emotionally out of his depth, spending one press conference swearing under his breath at one of the most pleasant members of the Brazilian press corps. The second-half collapse against Holland in the 2010 quarter-finals had much to do with the state of the coach, who spent the match yelling at the referee and punching the dugout.

> "Dunga's disastrous initial press conference merely heightened the idea of a general flight from reality"

All of this is especially ironic given the fact that the CBF, the Brazilian FA, appear to have come to the conclusion that the 2014 failure was one of mentality rather than of football concepts. Everything would have been different, apparently, had the team reacted better to Neymar's injury.

The focus should have been on those who were playing rather than the absent hero (who, it might be mentioned, was the player who committed the most fouls in the Confederations Cup, with one of those fouls taking Italian right-back Ignazio Abate out of the competition).

Promising victory before the competition had also been an error, it seemed.

Scolari had always said Brazil would win and his co-ordinator, the vastly experienced Carlos Alberto Parreira, said at the end of May, when the squad joined up, that they already hand one hand on the trophy. All of this, it had been concluded, was regrettable. And so the call came for Dunga and his endless ruminations on the importance of "commitment".

He had no popular support and did not even figure in the list of names in the opinion polls. His only experience after losing the Brazil job was a spell in charge of Internacional that was not a great success. But once his old friend Gilmar Rinaldi was appointed as Brazil's new co-ordinator, the media speculated that he would get the nod. And so it proved.

If the option to take a backward step has its farcical elements, Dunga's disastrous initial press conference merely heightened the air of a flight from reality.

He mentioned his work with Internacional with pride, saying he left them fifth in the table, when in fact he was sacked with the team lying 11th and sinking fast.

He seemed desperate to come across as modern, citing his World Cup work as a pundit with his "good friend" Enrico (*sic*) Sacchi, the former Italy coach.

He spoke of how impressed he had been with Gimenez (*sic*) of Colombia – this on the day James Rodriguez was presented by Real Madrid.

And he appeared to view the World

Shouting the odds... but Scolari's assertion Brazil would win the trophy on home soil proved empty

DUNGA: *Life & times*

BORN

October 31, 1950

FULL NAME

Carlos Caetano Bledorn Verri

CLUBS AS A PLAYER

Internacional, Corinthians, Santos, Vasca da Gama, Pisa (Ita), Fiorentina (Ita), Pescara (Ita), Stuttgart (Ger), Jubilo Iwata (Jap)

INTERNATIONAL CAREER

Made his Brazil debut in 1987, winning the 1989 Copa America. Captained Brazil to success at the 1994 World Cup, although Rai had started the tournament as skipper. He won a total of 91 caps.

COACHING CAREER

Appointed Brazil coach in July 2006 despite no experience at club level. Coached them to success at the 2007 Copa America and 2009 Confederations Cup. Stepped down in July 2010 after Brazil were knocked out of the 2010 World Cup quarter-finals by Holland. Coached former club Internacional from December 2012 until October 2013.

Cup as a justification for his view of the game. As Tostao commented: "Dunga said that the majority of teams in the tournament marked deep to open up space for the counter-attack, as if he was saying 'that's the way that my teams play'.

"He did not mention the fact that the main characteristic of Germany and Spain, the last two champions, and of the best club sides in the world, is the exchange of passes while keeping compact – things the Brazil teams coached by he and Scolari did not do."

Why, then, have the CBF decided the recall of Dunga is the answer to the current sorry plight of the Brazil team? In part, because they are not capable of doing anything better. The organisation is presided over by Jose Maria Marin, an octogenarian with a background in far-right politics whose hero was Plinio Salgado, a home-grown Mussolini imitator. In this nationalist mindset, the idea of a foreign coach represents a threat. Scolari was rushed into the job towards the end of 2012 after Guardiola had thrown his hat into the ring. And after the 7-1 debacle, with a dearth of Brazilian coaches boasting a top class international CV, the idea of a foreigner was being raised once more. Dunga, with his homilies on the importance of patriotism,

Opportunity lost...Tite, coach of 2012 Club World Cup winners Corinthians, had the best credentials for the national team job

Getting physical...Santos (white) meet Palmeiras in the Brazilian top flight

was a safe pair of hands.

But it also goes further, because the farcical elements of contemporary Brazilian football go well beyond the performance of the national team in the 2014 World Cup.

Given that Brazilian clubs pay vastly higher salaries than their competitors on the rest of the continent, it is nothing short of unbelievable the country has not supplied a single semi-finalist to this year's Libertadores Cup. And though Brazilian clubs won the trophy in each of the previous four years, they never dominated in the way that might be expected from their financial advantage. And all came back from the Club World Cup with their tail between their legs – with the exception of 2012 champions Corinthians, coached by Tite who, by some distance, is the best qualified domestic candidate for the national job.

A recent survey of average crowd figures found only two Brazilian clubs in the world's top 100. For all the money from TV rights and sponsorship deals, Brazil's clubs are so deep in debt that a government bail out is being discussed. The domestic calendar is out of sync with the rest of the world and makes no sense at all. In an increasingly globalised context, Brazilian football is struggling to compete. All of these things, too, played their part in the 7-1 semi-final defeat.

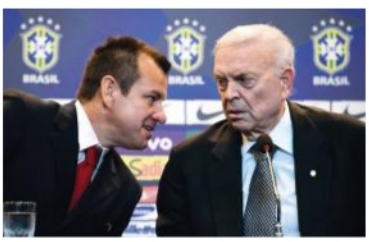
From the point of view of the old guard at the CBF, this is a scary scenario. Changing, regrouping and bouncing back

> "I'm perplexed and surprised. I don't understand anything."
>
> Former Brazil international Tostao reacts to Dunga's appointment

in the way Germany did a decade ago would entail a complete overhaul of the way the game in Brazil is run.

An antiquated power structure, based on control of the little clubs, would need to be swept away and replaced with something more rational. But systems as entrenched as Brazil's do not change willingly. Indeed, they would rather not even think about the need for change.

It is far less painful for them to turn the clock back, recall Dunga and hope that his talk of the need for more commitment can win enough matches to enable people to forget Brazilian football is operating so short of its potential – a state of affairs that manages to be both farcical and tragic. **WS**



Pragmatic choice...Dunga with CBF president Jose Maria Marin on his appointment

Dispatches

Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

P32

ARGENTINA
The game is in transition following the death of AFA president Julio Grondona and the resignation of national coach Alejandro Sabella.

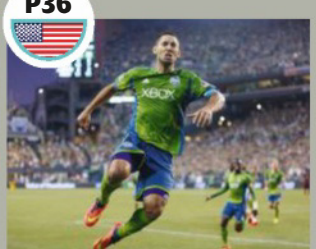
P34

ASIA
Failure of all four World Cup finalists in Brazil this summer highlights the continent's continuing problems.

P35

CAMEROON
The national coach is determined to carry on, while Samuel Eto'o eyes a fifth World Cup finals.

P36



USA
MLS goes from strength to strength and has now outlasted the old NASL.

P38

FRENCH GUIANA
Former World Cup goalkeeper Bernard Lama seeks social change through football.

JOEL RICHARDS
in Buenos Aires

Era ends with Grondona's passing

Changes ahead for national coach, AFA president and the domestic league

The press conference had been arranged for 4pm at the national team's training headquarters outside Buenos Aires, in Ezeiza. Alejandro Sabella was set to make his final appearance as Argentina coach, having guided the side to the World Cup Final in Brazil weeks earlier.

Across town, at the presidential palace, the Casa Rosada, the focus was on how the country was about to go into default, or a technical default, or as the government preferred to label it, "a legal impasse". Whatever it was called, the latest news from New York about negotiations with voracious hedge funds demanding full repayment on their Argentinian bonds was not good.

It was already set to be a busy day. And then at around midday on July 30, the news broke that Julio Grondona, AFA president and FIFA vice-president, had died after heart complications, aged 82.

Grondona's death made headlines across the world. But back home it would be felt in equal measure both in Ezeiza and at the Casa Rosada because, during his 35-year presidency, national politics and football were inevitably and inextricably intertwined.

No one person had held on to such a powerful position in Argentina for as long as Grondona had. At Casa Rosada, in the capacity of representing AFA, he had met with presidents of varying ideology and legitimacy, from the murderous military dictatorship in power when he became AFA president in 1979, through Radical and Peronist governments of differing colours. In the meantime, while he accompanied Argentina to nine World Cup finals, winning in 1986 and runners-up in 2014, across the river in Uruguay their FA had gone through 13 different presidents in the same period.

Grondona himself had pencilled in 2015 as the year he would step down. But there was no plan in place for succession. Some wondered if he had really meant it. On the news of his death, seven days of mourning were announced, with the start of the new season delayed and AFA vice-president Luis Segura assuming control in the interim. Lionel Messi and FIFA president Sepp Blatter flew in to pay their respects. As those who had worked alongside him gave interviews, and Grondona's legacy was discussed and debated, what was clear was that Argentinian football would never again have a president quite like him.

"They give me my power," he would say of the clubs and presidents who voted for him in every presidential election. Grondona's presidency was "socialism with money" according to him. Put another way, everyone owed Grondona a favour as he would help to bail out needy clubs. He described what a president requires as the "Three Ps": *Paz, Paciencia y Pelotas*, which translates as "peace, patience and balls".

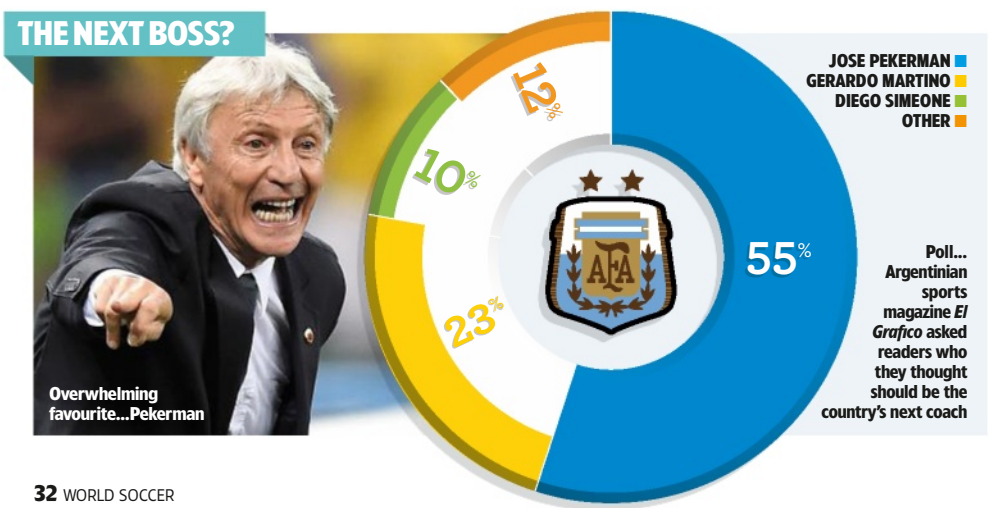
> "I've had more accusations against me than Al Capone"
>
> The late Julio Grondona, Argentinian FA president

There were plenty of accusations over the years. "I've had more accusations against me than Al Capone," he once quipped. The engraving on his ring was testament to his approach to problems: "*Todo Pasa*" [everything passes]. His loyalists point to him never facing trial. Merely echoing reports of corruption allegations would earn calls from fervent supporters to clarify the issue.

His detractors like to point to photos of him from the early years in the AFA, when the country was still ruled by a military dictatorship. Grondona's position at FIFA was inherited from Carlos Lacoste, who had reached the position of FIFA vice-president without having an official position at the AFA or any Argentinian club, as per the statutes, but who had overseen the organisation of the 1978 World Cup. Years later, the Buenos Aires courts said Lacoste had provided unsatisfactory evidence of how he increased his personal wealth by 443 per cent between 1977 and 1979.

Grondona led the AFA with dexterity. Despite signing a contract for TV rights in 1996 with the Clarin Group that lasted until 2014, he ripped that up in 2009 to

THE NEXT BOSS?



Overwhelming favourite...Pekerman

Poll... Argentinian sports magazine *El Grafico* asked readers who they thought should be the country's next coach

Last bow...coach Sabella and his side after their World Cup Final defeat. Sabella later stepped down

sign a new deal with the Casa Rosada. "*Futbol Para Todos*" was born, an agreement in place today with the government as rights holders, games free to watch on national television and a deal that constitutes a considerably better financial agreement for the AFA and the clubs that the previous agreement.

Perhaps of least concern to the new president is that the national team needs a new coach. Gerardo Martino had been widely touted as the replacement for Sabella. He brings international experience from his spell with Paraguay, not to mention a good relationship with Messi, and is a favourite of the AFA.

But the AFA and its new president must also deal with a worrying panorama in the domestic league.

When the season is up and running again, there will be the *barras bravas* behind the goals. There will be no away supporters, who are barred under the ban that disingenuously cites problems between sets of supporters as the root cause of endemic violence in football. Based on figures from non governmental organisation *Salvemos al Futbol* (Let's save Football), it is a question of weeks before another name is added to the 286 football-related deaths in Argentina. In 1979, when Grondona took over, that number was 103.

There will be the dilapidated stadiums, the teams mined of quality who are hoping to sell their best young player for a much-need cash injection. *Futbol Para Todos* has dramatically increased TV income for clubs but their debts continue to snowball. Historically, Argentinian football has always had these problems, but failure to deal with these issues is a failure of Grondona's presidency.

What will change, in a country that already specialises in eccentric league set-ups, is the league structure. This season had already been named the Transition Tournament. The three-year coefficient that decides relegation, and that Grondona's AFA installed in 1983, is on hold. There will be one short season, in keeping with the system installed in the early 1990s, until the end of the year. Then, next February, 10 teams will be promoted from the second division to create the new 30-team super league. It is a format about which the only certainty, right now, is that it is what Grondona wanted. Few see any merit in the idea.

With the death of Grondona, Argentinian football is in transition. It is unlikely there will ever be a president who wields such power and who is as controversial as he is adored.

Whether this transition is simply towards a continuation of how it has been run for the past 35 years, or whether it is towards a real transformation, is up to Argentinian football itself. **WS**

JOHN DUERDEN

Time to face facts

World Cup failure highlights continent's problems

Disappointment...the Japan squad were too embarrassed to acknowledge fans on their return to Tokyo

It is almost impossible to generalise about Asian football given the size and diversity of the giant continent, but when the facts from Brazil 2014 are so stark, sweeping statements are inevitable. Twelve games and three points equals four last-place finishes and complete failure. Asia's global standing sank pretty low in June – and by the time the month was out, the World Cup quartet were already home.

Australia were pointless but the happiest. A tough group removed pressure and helped coach Ange Postecoglou continue with the regeneration of an old team. The Socceroos had provided hope for the future and, fleetingly, the present, taking a 2-1 lead against Holland and bouncing back from a terrible start against Chile to push the South Americans all the way. Postecoglou has won just one of his eight games in charge but he is still seen as the right man for the job.

Carlos Queiroz is set to stay in charge of Iran. A solid goalless draw with Nigeria didn't thrill the neutrals but it was the team's first World Cup clean sheet at the 10th attempt. The counter-attacking game plan almost worked spectacularly against Argentina and it took Lionel Messi's last-minute goal to deny Queiroz's side a deserved point. The one disappointment was the defeat by Bosnia. The Persians needed to win but lacked urgency until it was too late. Still, most fans were satisfied given the team's lack of preparation games.

South Korea and Japan, so often standard bearers for Asia, were the biggest disappointments as both expected to progress. Japan started well against Ivory Coast but passively fell apart in the second half. Then came a slow goalless draw with 10-man Greece as the Asian champions abandoned their usual slick pass-and-move groove to send cross after cross into the area to the grateful Greeks. It ended with a lesson in ruthless finishing from Colombia. No wonder the players looked embarrassed at the enthusiastic welcome they received from fans at Tokyo's Narita Airport.

When they arrived home, South Korea's squad were greeted by a hail of toffees – a serious insult in that country's culture, which politely translates as "screw you". The inexperience of Hong Myung-bo showed, with the opening draw against Russia – 11 months after his appointment – being the former World Cup skipper's first competitive game as a senior coach.

Against Algeria, the South Korea defence, long an issue but seemingly neglected, collapsed. Going forward, Bayer Leverkusen's Son Heung-min apart, there wasn't much either. It all ended with a feeble loss against a 10-man second-string Belgium.

Japanese post-mortems were flying around faster than sweets at Incheon airport. Japan had excellent preparation, progressed under coach Alberto Zaccheroni but didn't look ready and certainly didn't seem able to dig deep when it mattered. This, added to strange tactical decisions, the usual central defensive and goalscoring issues, and the more unexpected poor form of the three big attacking stars – Keisuke Honda, Shinji Kagawa and Shinji Okazaki – resulted in a 2006-style nightmare.

Zaccheroni left to be replaced by Javier Aguirre. The Japan FA wanted someone with World Cup experience and they felt that the Mexican game is not so dissimilar to their own. Hong initially looked safe but the growing fan anger at his perceived favouritism to certain players, such as the ineffectual Park Chu-young, resulted in resignation with senior KFA members following suit.

> "Our performances in Brazil at the World Cup reaffirmed that we are moving in the right direction"
>
> **Australia coach Ange Postecoglou**

Other problems need to be solved in the long term. It is clear Asia could do more to prepare its best teams for global challenges. Japan were barely tested in qualification and prestigious friendly games proved to be no substitute for competitive clashes. Korea were poor yet still made it. Asia's big boys need the rest to improve but politics, corruption and short-termism mean it won't be easy.

Diverting some of the money that leaves Asia to support or own European teams into investment in local leagues would help. As well as developing talent, more thought should also be given when exporting it; sitting on European benches is not ideal preparation for a World Cup. Imports also need to be of a better quality. There are too many mediocre foreigners at Asian clubs who are no better than the local talent, whose development is blocked.

This and more – and restoring Asia's reputation – will take time but must start now to ensure that three points from 12 games never happens again. WS

Shame...South Korean FA president Chung Mong-gyu (centre) and committee members apologise for the team's poor showing in Brazil

MARK GLEESON

Finke staying on

Poor World Cup won't force German coach out

Despite a virulent opposition in the central African country to his tenure, Volker Finke insists he will stay on and see out his contract as Cameroon coach in the wake of a disastrous World Cup that was overshadowed by squabbling over money and match-fixing allegations.

"For me it is very clear," the German-born coach told Cameroon television as he faced an inquisition into the Indomitable Lions' calamitous time in Brazil. "I have a two-year contract. I will do my work – and if you don't want it, you need only tell me."

Finke said he had already begun preparations for the African Nations Cup qualifiers, which start in September with tough matches against the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ivory Coast.

"I don't plan to wait until the last minute to arrange things, as we have seen in Brazil," he said in a reference to shoddy arrangements around Cameroon's World Cup campaign.

Finke said Cameroon had been beset by logistical problems before and during the tournament, where they lost all three matches and were the first of the 32 participating countries to be mathematically eliminated.

"Every day there were problems and we were always discussing them late into the night. It was never anything to do with football. There was always a rivalry between officials and the captain," he said in a reference to the controversial role of Samuel Eto'o, who led a strike over more money for the 23-man squad that delayed the team's departure to Brazil.

"It is very clear that it is impossible to advance our team in these circumstances. I've made a report and suggestions to change things. But really we need to change habits – and that depends on the personality of the players and officials."

The role of Eto'o as ringleader of the strike action has drawn a mixed reaction. While some see him as heroic in his bid to ensure that the players get their fair share and that greedy officials do not sit with their snouts in the trough, others believe he wields too much power because of his status within Cameroonian football.

Former international goalkeeper Joseph Antoine Bell says Cameroon have lost whatever last vestige of dignity they had from their six previous World Cup appearances, including their charismatic showing in 1990 when they became the first African country to reach the quarter-finals. But Eto'o is likely to stay on with the team – as long as he can find a new club in the wake of his contract with Chelsea expiring. The 33-year-old says he wants to aim for a fifth World Cup finals appearance at Russia 2018.

The 66-year-old Finke, whose contract runs out in May next year, did not discuss allegations in a German magazine that Cameroon's 4-0 Group A loss to Croatia in Manaus was fixed.

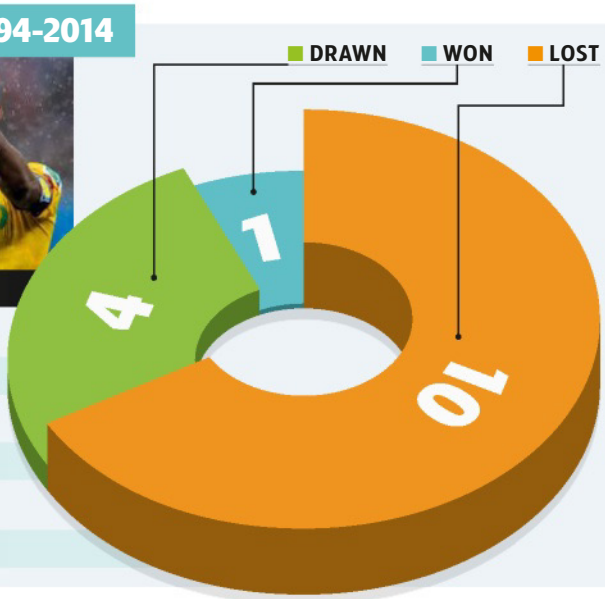
FIFA and the Cameroon Football Federation are investigating but do not look to be taking too seriously the claims of *Der Spiegel* and convicted fraudster Wilson Raj Perumal. WS

Defiant...Finke will not want a repeat of the problems that troubled the Cameroon squad in Brazil

> "It is stupid to think that anyone would have fixed Cameroon's matches in Brazil. Why would anyone be tempted to arrange to win against a team that would lose anyway?" Ex-Cameroon goalkeeper Joseph Antoine Bell

WORLD CUP RECORD 1994-2014

	P	W	D	L	F	A
1994	3	0	1	2	3	11
1998	3	0	2	1	2	5
2002	3	1	1	1	2	3
2006	DID NOT QUALIFY					
2010	3	0	0	3	2	5
2014	3	0	0	3	1	9



PAUL GARDNER
in New York

Nineteen years and counting

MLS has now outlived the NASL

It used to be that predicting future developments in American pro soccer – from trying to work out which clubs would last the season, or if the sport itself would even still be around next year – was a mug's game. There was no certainty to be found and no stable foundation to guarantee that soccer had any future at all.

But Major League Soccer has survived. Where the North American Soccer League collapsed in 1984 after its 18th season, MLS is now in its 19th campaign. Simply by surviving, MLS has changed the picture dramatically.

Pro soccer's past failures can all be attributed to a lack of interest from the US sports fan. As Sam Goldwyn put it: "If they don't wanna come, you can't stop them." Without fans in the stadiums, investors – most of whom had no ties to the sport – quickly withdrew their money.

MLS had its crisis year in 1999 when it came perilously close to bankruptcy. But the recovery was quick and strong; in fact, it was already under way in 1999, when Columbus Crew built the league's first soccer-specific stadium.

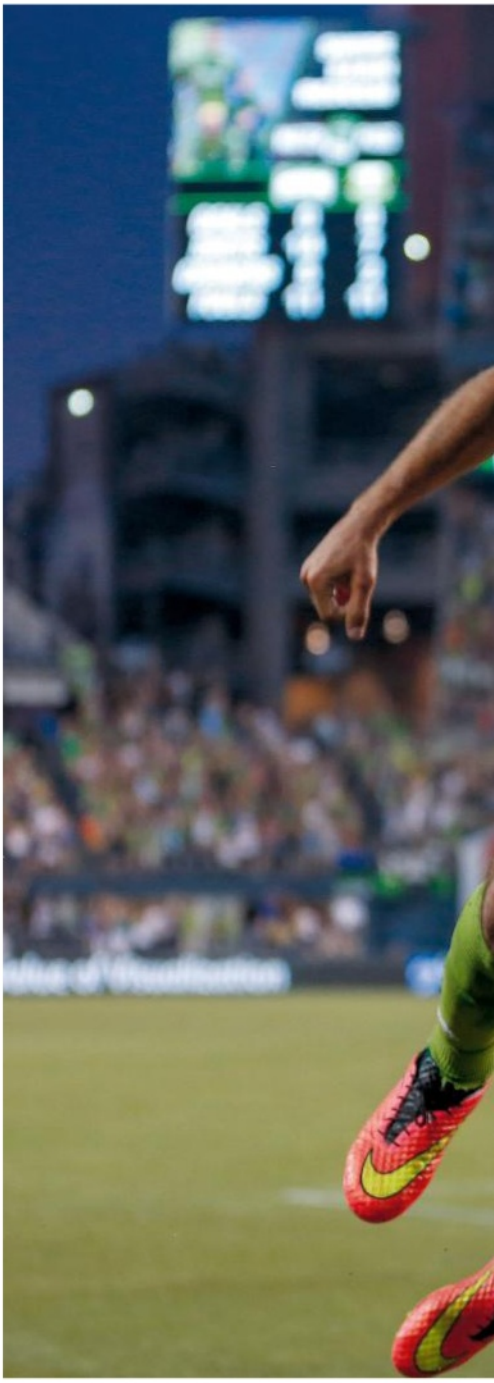
MLS now has 14 new stadiums, giving those clubs, and the sport, a permanent, tangible presence in local communities. That is a factor that MLS commissioner Don Garber emphasises when he speaks of an ambition to become one of the world's top leagues. "Today we have clubs like Sporting Kansas City, Seattle Sounders and Portland Timbers who are embedded in those communities, who really matter," says Garber.

MLS has also had some rather unexpected success this season in repatriating US national-team players from Europe. Clint Dempsey is now with Seattle and Michael Bradley has joined Toronto. It is not likely that this marks a trend – young Americans are still attracted by the glamour of Europe – but it does show that MLS clubs are willing to invest serious money in top players.

Outside of the MLS-imposed salary cap, only Designated Players (DPs) can be paid top wages and a club is only permitted to have three in its squad. But the influence of the DPs has been huge – particularly at Los Angeles Galaxy, where the DP scheme started with David Beckham and continues with the regular goalscoring of Robbie Keane.

The level of MLS play, thanks to the arrival of the DPs, has unquestionably improved. It has been a league-wide improvement and it cannot be said that there is a dominant MLS club. If spending big bucks on DPs is the crucial factor, then Galaxy, Seattle, Toronto and New York Red Bulls should be in command. But at the halfway point in the 2014 season, Sporting Kansas City lead the Eastern Conference while Seattle top the west – but with Real Salt Lake in second place ahead of Galaxy.

Kansas City are the current MLS champions and have adopted a unique approach to DP signings. Rather than bringing in top foreign stars or returning Americans, they have awarded DP status (and salaries) to two American players. Matt Besler and Graham Zusi, who are both 27, have spent their entire pro careers with KC and both were members of the World Cup squad in Brazil, where their performances generated interest from European clubs. But KC's move to offer both long-term contracts at greatly improved salaries has squelched any move abroad.



> "We've got to be in a situation where our clubs are making and not losing money"
> MLS commissioner Don Garber

The KC strategy, though, is not likely to catch on widely, if only because of the shortage of good young American players. "We've got to get better at developing players," says Garber, adding that the MLS club academies, the US Soccer Federation academies and the colleges must all play their part.

The league's need for good young players is going to increase over the next few years. MLS is to expand from the current 19 teams to 24 by 2020, and this situation is undoubtedly encouraging as many cities have expressed an interest in having an MLS team – including Austin, San Antonio, Atlanta, Cleveland, Detroit, Minneapolis and Sacramento.

But the most prominent of the expansion cities, by far, is New York City, which has already been announced as the league's 20th team and is scheduled to begin playing next year. The league already has New York Red Bulls, but they operate and play in New Jersey. The newly

Big name...Spain's Villa will be in New York City colours next year

A stadium problem also besets the other big-time MLS expansion move. Beckham has put together a group to operate a team in Miami and elaborate architectural drawings of a stunning state-of-the-art stadium to be built in downtown Miami have been released. But there is considerable local opposition and Garber has now joined the dispute, saying unless a stadium is built in a downtown site, MLS will not put a team in the city.

There is also a stadium angle to the Chivas USA story. The club, founded in 2005, was owned by Jorge Vergara, who also owns the Guadalajara parent club. Chivas USA are based in Los Angeles, where they share a stadium with Galaxy, and the idea was that the team would use primarily Mexican players and appeal to the huge Mexican-American community in southern California. That plan, however, never took off and earlier this year Vergara sold the club to MLS. New owners are being sought but Garber has made it clear the club will not be moved from LA, so a stadium must be built there.

Two questions that are repeatedly asked of MLS are, when will there be introduce promotion and relegation? And, when will it drop the play-off system and simply decide the championship on overall league positions?

Garber used to offer careful explanations of why the American market and US fans liked these arrangements, and why he felt they were necessary. Now, when asked if they are going to happen, he simply replies "no".

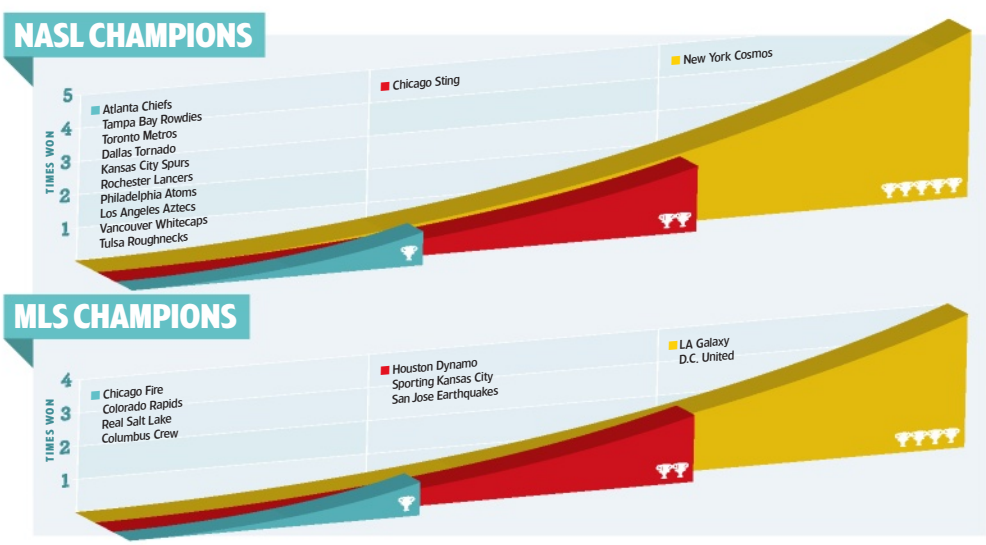
His confidence that he is making the right decisions is boosted by the league's growing popularity. Average attendances are now reported as over 18,000, there appears to be no shortage of sponsors (particularly those interested in the 18-30 year old group, where MLS claims its strongest support), and a new TV deal has been signed with three networks, in English and Spanish.

"We are now a stable, viable and productive entity," says Garber. "But we're still developing and we have to improve our financial condition." WS

Big leap forward...the presence of players such as Dempsey at Seattle Sounders has helped boost the image of MLS

formed New York City FC will be a true New York club with a stadium – yet to be built – within the city.

That was the story when the announcement was made, in May 2013, that the club would be backed by Manchester City's super-rich owners and the New York Yankees baseball club. But well over a year has passed since then, and never mind the stadium, the club hasn't even been able to find a suitable site. The club has so far signed Frank Lampard and David Villa, and has now admitted that it will be playing its first season (and maybe beyond that) in the splendid, but awkwardly shaped, New York Yankees baseball stadium.



STEVE MENARY

Lama making plans

Former World Cup goalkeeper is seeking social change

Daring to dream...French Guiana's ambition is to play in next year's CONCACAF Gold Cup

For years, football in French Guiana has been deemed an irrelevance. The local game is undeveloped, the national team rarely plays and ambitious players have to leave to further their careers.

Bernard Lama was one of those who quit the French overseas territory perched on the top of South America. He went on to win more than 40 caps in goal for France and, having since returned home, he now wants to use football as a force for social change. And he has big plans.

"Our population is going to double in the next few years because there are so many people under 25," says the 51-year-old. "We have a lot of kids but not enough schools. We have 3,000 or 4,000 kids with no schools and on the street. I prefer they play football.

"We have a lot of quality and we can build something with these kids."

Lama was elected vice-president of the Ligue de Football de la Guyane (LFG) in 2012 on a four-year term. The LFG was formed in 1962 but only became a full member of CONCACAF last year, and Lama sees no purpose in remaining part of the Federation Francaise de Football (FFF). He claims that membership of the FFF brings in only €60,000 a year to the LGF. "What can we do with that?" he says. "In 40 years, the French federation haven't done anything for us. We don't even have a technical director. We need to move out of that federation to develop."

Membership of FIFA would bring in a minimum of $250,000 a year through the world body's financial assistance programme, plus the chance to bid for more funds for capital projects.

As part of their plans, the LFG has also recruited Jerome Champagne – a former FIFA insider and a candidate in the world body's presidential election next year – to help develop a strategy up to 2030. Those plans include building a training centre for young players aged up to under-19 level and providing a base for athletes at the 2016 Olympic Games in neighbouring Brazil.

At international level, the Caribbean Cup has been French Guiana's only option and success in September's next round of qualifiers – in a group alongside hosts Puerto Rico, Curacao and Grenada – is vital according to Lama, who says: "It's very important to see our guys playing at international level. Kids must have their dreams."

> "In 40 years, the French federation haven't done anything for us"
>
> Bernard Lama

In the past, French Guiana could not call on any overseas professionals as Caribbean Cup games were never staged in an official international break. But that has changed this year and Lama expects goalkeeper Donovan Leon of Auxerre, Lens full-back Ludovic Baal and Fabrice Awong, a midfielder with Greek club Kallithea, to travel to Puerto Rico. Sloan Privat, a striker with Gent of Belgium, might also be called up.

"We could have 12 professional players," says Lama, whose ambitions are higher than just qualifying for November's finals in Jamaica. "We want to see these guys again as they have not been home to French Guiana for a long time.

"We have an ambition to play in the Gold Cup; that is our World Cup. If the kids see our guys at the Gold Cup, it will help them with their dreams." WS

FRENCH GUIANA'S *LES BLEUS*

RAOUL DIAGNE
Of Senegalese origin but born in French Guiana, in 1931 he became the first black player to play for France's national side.

JEAN-CLAUDE DARCHEVILLE
Played in England, Greece, Scotland and France. Represented France at under-21 level but finished his career in the 2012 Caribbean Cup finals with French Guiana.

BERNARD LAMA
Won 44 caps for France, played at Euro 96 and Euro 2000, and was in the 1998 World Cup-winning squad (although he did not make an appearance).

FLORENT MALOUDA
Born in Cayenne, he left for France and made his debut for Chateauroux aged 16. He won 80 caps for France between 2004 and 2012, and played in the 2006 World Cup Final.

THE NEW SEASON IN EUROPE

Your essential guide to Europe's top 19 leagues

Over the next 44 pages, *World Soccer* previews Europe's new league campaigns

Pre-season...Wolfsburg's Kevin Scheidhauer (front) and Javi Martinez of Bayern Munich will meet again on the first day of the season

THE PLAYERS TO WATCH

40 THE PICK OF THIS SUMMER'S TRANSFERS

EUROPEAN LEAGUES: A-Z

48 AUSTRIA
49 BELGIUM
50 BULGARIA
51 CZECH REPUBLIC
52 DENMARK
54 ENGLAND
58 FRANCE
62 GERMANY
66 GREECE
67 HOLLAND
68 ITALY
72 POLAND
73 PORTUGAL
74 RUSSIA
75 SCOTLAND
76 SPAIN
81 SWITZERLAND
82 TURKEY
83 UKRAINE

For the 2014-15 fixtures for all these leagues, go to **www.worldsoccer.com/world-service**

Marquee moves

Steller names on the move

Welcome addition...Rodriguez received a fantastic reception on his arrival in Madrid

BERNABEU IN THE GRIP OF "JAMESMANIA"

JAMES RODRIGUEZ

Real Madrid

Real Madrid's €80million swoop for Monaco's Colombian superstar certainly sparked a fever in "Planet Galactico". With 45,000 fans turning up at the Bernabeu to see the unveiling of the 23-year-old attacking midfield virtuoso, the club shop selling no fewer than 900 of his number 10 shirts in the hour following the welcome party and the media going gaga about the boy from Ibague, "Jamesmania" has taken a vice-like grip.

Only the third Colombian to play professionally for Real – following in the missing in action footsteps of Freddy Rincon, 1995-96, and Edwin Congo, 2001-02 – the new boy will, of course, be expected to produce much, much more in the famous all-white strip.

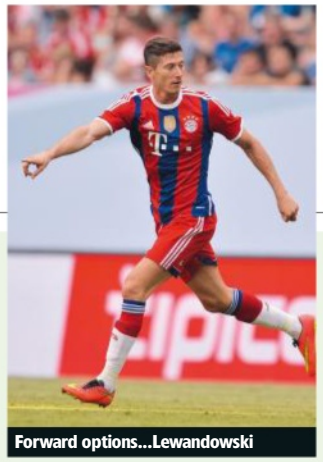
His country might not have won the 2014 World Cup – eliminated at the quarter-final stage by hosts Brazil – but in the all-singing, all-dancing Rodriguez, the Colombians arguably had the player of the tournament. He was the finals' top scorer with five goals, creative force par excellence and leader of one of the most attractive sides in the competition.

So just where will Real coach Carlo Ancelotti use the technique, intelligence, penetrative passing and fluency of his new left-footed jewel? As a second striker? On the right or left flank? Or as a central playmaker? Andre Villas-Boas, his coach for the 2010-11 season at Porto has no doubts, explaining: "His type of talent requires freedom on the pitch and for this reason, the number 10 is the best position for him. With the quality of his final ball, his vision and ability to finish with subtlety or power, he can be very useful there.

"I think he has all the ingredients to adapt to the demands and high expectations at Real. I say this because of his character. He's natural, cheery, calm and takes things in his stride. He will be very well accepted by the Real squad and this will help him a great deal."

No question about it. Cristiano Ronaldo, Bale, Benzema and co are going to enjoy playing with the latest South American marvel.

> "He has all the ingredients to adapt to the demands and high expectations at Real"
>
> Andre Villas-Boas on James Rodriguez


Forward options...Lewandowski

PLUS

IVAN RATIKIC
Barcelona

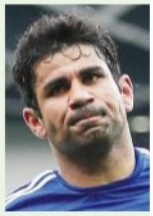
One of the stars of Sevilla's Europa League triumph, the Croatian cost Barca in the region of €25m.

ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI
Bayern Munich

The Pole has boosted Bayern's forward options after moving on a free transfer from rivals Borussia Dortmund.

DIEGO COSTA
Chelsea

The Brazil-born striker moved to London for around £32m after a fine campaign with Atletico Madrid.



World cup sales

Players who shone in Brazil

Opportunity...Mainz offer Jara another shot at the big time

SUMMER SHOWS BRING TOP-FLIGHT RETURN

GONZALO JARA

Mainz

If unfashionable Mainz have punched above their weight in the Bundesliga over the past few seasons, much of that rags-to-riches success is due to the flair of general manager Christian Heidel to sniff out a transfer market bargain. And the former car-showroom owner certainly drove away with top-notch performer when signing the long-serving Chilean World Cup defender on a Bosman free.

The decision of English Championship side Nottingham Forest to release him at the end of last term would not exactly have boosted the 28-year-old's self-esteem. But at least he had the opportunity to put himself in the shop window at the World Cup – and this he duly did, impressing in all four of Chile's games with his grit and reliability on left-side of their three-man back-line.

"During the World Cup, Jara was very much to the fore with his strong performances," says Heidel. "He has played at the highest level and has a lot of positive aspects to his game. We're convinced we've brought in someone to give stability to our defence."

True to form, Mainz should be deriving maximum benefit from minimal cost. The former Colo Colo star has immense experience – two World Cup finals and 69 caps – is tenacious, combative and streetwise. He puts the interests of the team first, has decent technique and can fill every rearguard role from central defence (both three and four-man variants) to right-back or holding midfielder.

His return to top-flight football is long overdue. In England for the past five years – at West Bromwich Albion, Nottingham Forest and on loan to Brighton & Hove Albion – he spent most of his time outside the Premier League and now has to prove himself all over again. Forest fans were critical of his displays in the second half of last season and the accusation of saving himself for the World Cup will have cut deep.

Off target with his spot-kick in the penalty shoot-out defeat to Brazil in the round of 16, "Jarita" will be looking for a truer aim on the Bundesliga circuit.

PLUS

SERGIO ROMERO

Benfica

An excellent World Cup campaign earned Argentina's goalkeeper a move from Sampdoria to Portugal.

ANTOINE GRIEZMANN

Atletico Madrid

It was not all one-way traffic in Madrid, with the French international checking in after a €30m move from Real Sociedad.

JEFFERSON MONTERO

Swansea City

The winger, one of the few stars of Ecuador's campaign in Brazil, moved from Mexican side Morelia.

Young guns

Highly-rated young players on the move

PLUS

RYAN GAULD
Sporting Lisbon

The 18-year-old Scot turned down offers from English clubs to move to Portugal in a deal will earn Dundee United £3m.

LAZAR MARKOVIC
Liverpool

The 20-year-old Serb has played across the front line for Benfica and Liverpool were prepared to pay £20m for his talent.

ALEN HALILOVIC
Barcelona

The 18-year-old Croatian cost just under €2m from Dinamo Zagreb and he is expected to start out in Barca's B team.

Crowd pleaser... Roma fans hope Iturbe can inspire their side this season

SNAPPED UP FROM UNDER JUVE'S NOSE

JUAN ITURBE

Roma

Deprived of Italian championship spoils since 2001, everyone connected with Roma is bursting with confidence that 2014-15 will be the season when they finally pick up another scudetto. And one of the principal reasons for the optimism in the yellow-and-red ranks is the €22m acquisition of the quicksilver Argentina under-20 front runner.

Outstanding for Verona last term, the 21-year old dubbed "*La Pulguita*" (the little flea) had been widely assumed to already be in the pocket of champions Juventus. But in the dog-eat-dog habitat of Roma technical director Walter Sabatini, there is no such thing as a lost cause. And with the Juve powers-that-be distracted by the surprise summer exit of coach Antonio Conte, the artful Romans promptly set about hijacking the deal; more than happy to make the youngster the second-biggest signing in the club's history after Argentina striker Gabriel Batistuta, who cost €25.85m from Fiorentina in 2000.

> "I like being a little naughty on the pitch. I can be slightly crazy"
>
> Juan Iturbe

Despite the massive price tag and the huge expectations, the little winger sensibly opted to play the modest, wide-eyed innocent at his first Roma press conference, stating: "I've come to a great a club.

"I'm still young and I'm sure I'll learn plenty from coach [Rudi] Garcia and players of the stature of Francesco Totti and Daniele De Rossi. I have to work hard to find space for myself in such a competitive team.

"When my agent told me that Roma were interested and that the offer was a good one, I accepted straight away. I love lively, bubbling places. I like being a little naughty on the pitch. I can be slightly crazy."

Too young and too immature to make an impact when first brought to Europe by Porto in 2011, the left-footer has plenty of experience both on that flank and as a second striker. However, he undoubtedly carries more threat cutting in from the right, where Garcia will look to unleash his pace, excellent close control, shooting power from distance and sheer unpredictability.

A player once burdened and inhibited by the "new Messi" tag, he now seems to be thriving on the comparisons.

Value buys

The players providing top dollar value

WINGER RETURNS TO HIS FIRST LOVE

ROMAIN ALESSANDRINI

Marseille

In contrast to the long-standing Marseille tradition of splashing the cash on star names with wild abandon, current owner Margarita Louis-Dreyfus insists on bearing down on personnel costs and will therefore have been delighted with the €5m signing of the Rennes left-winger who could conceivably feature for France in the not-too distant future.

After trailing the gifted wide man for the best part of two seasons, OM at last have the object of their desire on the payroll and there is every chance that the 25-year-old will prove a Provencal favourite. As a local Marseille lad and long-time club supporter, he will have no problem achieving acceptance at the Stade Velodrome, and he plays with the flair that the fans in these parts adore. And, unusually for a maverick type, he works incredibly hard as well.

Thanks to his speed off the mark, extravagant dribbling, laser-guided crosses and power-packed shooting from outside the box, he can single-handedly change the dynamic of a game.

Having spent six years with Marseille as a schoolboy and junior before falling out with a coach who wanted him to play full-back and quitting in a fit of pique, a desire to make good on home turf means he will not be lacking in motivation this time around.

No one could say that he has followed a conventional, uncomplicated path to the top of the French game. As a first teamer with third-tier Gueugnon and then second-division Clermont, life in the outposts was tough, and he has twice ruptured cruciate knee ligaments – his left while with Gueugnon, in 2009, and his right playing for Rennes early in 2013, just days after sitting on the bench for France's friendly against Germany in Paris.

> "There have been times when his career has been on the line"
>
> Romain Alessandrini's former team-mate, Romain Genevois

If he had not spent the last 18 months in rehabilitation and gradually easing himself back into full-throttle Ligue 1 action, he might well have gone to Brazil 2014. But at least he's back in business now – and ready to turn his Marseille dream into spectacular reality.

"There have been times when his career has been on the line, when it was in real danger of coming to an end," says ex-Gueugnon team-mate, Romain Genevois. "Yet every time, he's been up against it, he has returned stronger. That's very rare."

Determined...Alessandrini will give everything for the team he supported as a boy

PLUS

BOJAN KRKIC
Stoke City

The former Barcelona starlet, who cost Stoke £3m, has had spells with Roma, Milan and Ajax.

Goalscoring midfielder...Hahn (left)

ANDRE HAHN
Borussia Monchengladbach

The goalscorer midfielder, who was a member of Germany's 30-man provisional World Cup squad, joined Gladbach for around €2m after an impressive season with Augsburg.

EZEQUIEL GARAY
Zenit

The Argentinian defender, who was a key member of his country's World Cup side, cost €6m from Benfica.

Best Bosmans

Out-of-contract players signed for free

Fit...Rode hopes his problems are now all behind him

INJURY NO BARRIER FOR BAYERN NEWCOMER

SEBASTIAN RODE

Bayern Munich

Few German football insiders would have been surprised by Bayern Munich's ahead-of-the-game moves to enrol the Eintracht Frankfurt defensive midfielder on a free transfer.

Throughout their history as serial European and domestic winners, Bayern have made it almost a commandment to deploy unsung but highly effective grafters in the engine room – Bernd Durnberger, Wolfgang Kraus, Jens Jeremies, Didi Hamann and Owen Hargreaves to name just five –and this 23-year-old is one of the best of the new crop, a natural athlete and competitor bristling with dynamism, application and industry.

With Eintracht announcing his switch to the Allianz-Arena as early as January, all Bayern had to do, it seemed, was sit back and wait for delivery. However, even the best-laid plans can hit snags and when he fell victim to a serious knee-cartilage injury just a few weeks later, which ruled him out for the rest of the campaign, rumours spread that the deal would collapse.

But reassured by the medical reports of club doctor Hans-Wilhelm Muller-Wohlfahrt, Bayern hung in and the signs in pre-season were that the former under-21 international was back to his best. "Rode has been very impressive," declares director of sport Matthias Sammer. "Don't forget he was out for five months. He plays each game as though there's no tomorrow."

A vital cog for Eintracht over the past four seasons, he clearly will not find it easy to secure plentiful amounts of playing time in the elite ranks of Bayern, but there is no need for him to be overly daunted. His aggressive pressing and quick-change work in transition should suit the style of coach Pep Guardiola, while his modest approach will only win friends, and in his role of squad man he should bring freshness and elan.

"Players in the Bundesliga do not often receive a contract offer from Bayern," says Rode, who began his senior career in 2009 with third-division Kickers Offenbach.

"This is a huge next step in my career. My aims are to continue improving here, play as much as possible, earn titles and hopefully, to be selected for Germany.

"I'd love to go to the European Championships in France and win it. On the field I always give everything I have. We'll see what Pep Guardiola makes of me.

"During our negotiations, Matthias Sammer told me that I would have to learn to live with the competition for places.

"I know that it will not be simple. But I am hoping that the challenges ahead will bring the best out of me."

New start...Choupo-Moting

PLUS

ERIC CHOUPO-MOTING
Schalke
The Cameroon World Cup striker was snapped up by Schalke on a three-year deal after scoring 20 goals in 74 Bundesliga appearances for Mainz.

NEMANJA VIDIC
Internazionale
The Serbian centre-back left Manchester United after eight years to try a new challenge in Serie A.

ROMAN SHIROKOV
Spartak Moscow
Russia's captain missed the World Cup through injury and joined Spartak after running down his contract with Zenit.

Best loans

Top temporary moves

PSG FIND WAY ROUND FINANCIAL RESTRICTIONS

SERGE AURIER

Paris Saint-Germain

With his price rising markedly after excelling with Toulouse in Ligue 1 last season and cutting a dash for Ivory Coast at Brazil 2014, the right-back has signed a season-long loan at Paris Saint-Germain with the contractual promise of a permanent deal next June.

A PSG ruse to circumvent the financial fair-play restrictions placed on them last spring by UEFA? In all probability, yes. Sanctioned for exceeding permitted losses, the Parisians were forbidden to spend more than €60m this summer and could only boost the kitty by way of player sales

But with few money-spinning departures from the Parc des Princes and the budgetary well almost dry following the big-money arrival from Chelsea of Brazilian centre-back David Luiz, a loophole had to be found, hence the loan/deferred purchase of the 21-year-old graduate of the Lens academy.

Although rumours had been circulating that the French champions were tracking a higher-profile full-back – perhaps Dani Alves of Barcelona or Juventus' Swiss international Stephane Lichtsteiner – PSG coach Laurent Blanc insists that potential was the most important of his selection criteria. "Aurier is young and has lots of scope to improve," explains Blanc. "Like [Lucas] Digne and [Marco] Verratti, he should form the backbone of our team in three or four years time."

Why wait? Fast, strong, able to run all day and so attack-minded that he racked up six top-flight goals last term and made seven more, he was deservedly voted the best right-back in France for 2013-14. And on World Cup duty in Brazil he proved equally irresistible, dashing forward to set up two of the Ivorians' four goals.

No need for Blanc to slowly and patiently bring him along. To all intents and purposes, the kid from the Greater Paris suburb of Villepinte is ready to upgrade right here, right now.

"There's competition for places everywhere, not just at PSG," says Aurier, whose father, Leon Gbizie, played for Ivory Coast in the 1970s. "On signing for Toulouse I had to battle to win a spot in the first XI. In Paris or elsewhere, I step onto the pitch with the same desire and enthusiasm. I've been taught to be combative. This is the mould I've come from. I'm always looking to learn and toughen myself up.

"PSG would be an attractive proposition to anyone. They have big-name players and a collective ethic. They have been doing good things in Europe since the Qataris took over, and for all the players the challenge is a beautiful one."

Potential...Aurier could be part of backbone of the PSG side in a few years' time

> "I was taught to be combative...I'm always looking to learn and toughen myself up"
>
> Serge Aurier

PLUS

CRISTIAN TELLO

Porto

With his opportunities restricted by the arrival of Luis Suarez at Barca, he has joined the growing Spanish contingent at Porto.

DODO

Internazionale

Surplus to requirements at Roma following the arrival of Ashley Cole, the Brazilian has agreed a two-year loan with Inter.

LUCAS PIAZON

Eintracht Frankfurt

After spells at Malaga and Vitesse, the former Brazil under-17 star has left Chelsea for a spell in the Bundesliga.

The relaunch brigade

Players rebooting their careers in a new setting

Familiar...Lopez worked with Lopetegui when he was coach of Spain's under-21 side

REUNITED WITH SPAIN UNDER-21S MENTOR

ADRIAN LOPEZ

Porto

Fresh from collecting a Spanish Liga winners medal with Atletico Madrid and featuring at the business end of the Champions League – scoring against Chelsea in the semi-finals and coming on as an early substitute for the injured Diego Costa in the Final – one might have expected the lively striker/right winger to have been keen on sticking around at the Vicente Calderon in Madrid.

But in football there is always a bigger picture to appreciate and, relatively starved of starts over the last couple of years, the 26-year-old is now looking to rebuild his career in Portugal with Porto, who paid €11m to sign him.

A big hit in his first season for Atletico in 2011-12, notably contributing 11 goals to his team's Europa League triumph, he subsequently slipped down the forward-line preferences of coach Diego Simeone and was very much in the shadows of such talents as Radamel Falcao, Costa, David Villa and Raul Garcia.

"I felt very much at home at Atletico Madrid, but wanted to play every Sunday, and this wasn't the case with Senor Simeone," says the product of the Oviedo youth ranks. "I've an enormous desire to play, score goals and be happy at Porto.

"I'm delighted to have joined such a big club. It's a real advantage that I know how Porto coach Julen Lopetegui operates. I worked with him in the Spanish under-21 squad and he'll certainly help me adapt."

> "I felt very much at home at Atletico Madrid but I wanted to play every Sunday"
>
> Adrian Lopez on his reasons for leaving

What he needs above all else is a sustained period as a leading man in the famous blue-and-white stripes of Porto. Although good enough to be the top scorer at the 2011 European Under-21 Championship, to represent his country at the London Olympics and to win two senior caps – both earned in 2012 friendlies – his form at club level for Deportivo La Coruna and Atletico, plus loan spells with Alaves and Malaga, has on occasion proved too irregular; sometimes extraordinary in his touch and movement off the ball, sometimes a little too lightweight and passive.

Buried in his five-year contract with Porto is a €60m release clause. The time has come for him to justify it.

Return...Fabregas is back in London

PLUS

BEBE
Benfica

After four frustrating years with Manchester United, where many people questioned the wisdom of his £7m transfer in 2010, the striker has returned to Portugal in a deal that could be worth £2.4m.

CESC FABREGAS
Chelsea

The move back to his native Barcelona never quite worked out for the former Arsenal midfielder, who has joined Chelsea in a deal worth £30m.

ADAM SZALAI
Hoffenheim

The Hungarian striker was a prolific scorer at Mainz, but his career stalled at Schalke last season.

Career upgrade

Players moving on up

Dependable... Fernando will offer protection for the back line

CITY'S NEW MIDFIELD SENTRY

FERNANDO

Manchester City

City fans will be intrigued to discover that new Brazilian defensive midfielder, who was bought from Porto this summer for £12 million, first picked up his "*O Polvo*" (the octopus) nickname after going on a ball-winning spree for his old Portuguese club in a Champions League quarter-final against their arch rivals, Manchester United, back in April 2009.

"I had a good game that night," remembers the 26-year-old, who was the power behind the Porto throne for six seasons. "I was marking up well and stole lots of balls from the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo, Wayne Rooney and others. Later, someone told me that some fans had started calling me 'Octopus'. Those supporters were saying that I seemed to have many legs, that I seemed to be everywhere on the pitch.

"The nickname has stuck. It makes me happy. I take it as a big compliment."

A native of the Brazilian state of Goias, he is just the sort of high-grade destroyer that City need in the middle of the park. For all of Yaya Toure's rampaging forward runs, he does not always show the same commitment when tracking back, while – as shown in Brazil's disastrous World Cup semi-final against Germany – Fernandinho is more of a box-to-box player than an assiduous sentry in front of the back four.

Fernando's physical power, non-stop activity, heads-up covering and tactical discipline will keep the City back door firmly shut. And once danger is averted, he is no slouch in possession either, excellent at bringing the ball out from the back, crisp in his passing, and attentive to matters of rhythm and tempo.

"I am the sort of player who brings balance to the midfield," he says. "I have a similar role to that of Gilberto Silva and Dunga in Brazil teams of old. A striker gets pleasure from scoring a goal. I exist to stop them – and I'm happy with this function."

How Brazil could have used his resolute abilities this summer. However, he has not won a single full cap for the *Selecao*, still apparently paying the price for the ban he received for pushing a referee at the 2007 South American Under-20 Championship.

Prospect...Marseille's Batshuayi

PLUS

JEREMY MATHIEU
Barcelona

The French left-sided defender has cost Barca around €20m from Valencia as the club look to the post-Carles Puyol era.

FILIPE LUIS
Chelsea

With Ashley Cole leaving on a free, Chelsea moved for the Brazilian left-back who was part of Atletico Madrid's league-winning side last season.

MICHY BATSHUAYI
Marseille

Another Belgian talent departs the country. The under-21 striker left Standard Liege in a deal that could cost Marseille up to €6m.

Salzburg look streets ahead again

Flourishing...Spanish striker Soriano (left) and Brazilian forward Alan have helped turn Salzburg into an attractive, free-scoring side

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED JULY 19, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY 30, 2015

It is hard to imagine this year's Austrian Bundesliga will be anything other than another one-horse race as Salzburg have managed to keep together the core of the team which cantered home last season, wrapping up the title with eight games to spare and scoring a record 110 goals in the process.

No other club can match the resources that Red Bull have pumped in and, whatever you feel about the way the energy-drinks manufacturer have "rebranded" the club, there is no denying these have been put to excellent use by sporting director Ralf Rangnick since he took over two years ago.

Rangnick, who led Hoffenheim from the German third division to the top flight in successive seasons as a coach in his homeland, has rebuilt a Salzburg team with young players suited to a high-tempo pressing game. Brazilian forward Alan and defender Ramalho, Spanish striker Jonathan Soriano, Slovenian midfielder Kevin Kampl and Senegalese winger Sadio Mane have all flourished under Rangnick's guidance, turning Salzburg into one of the most eye-catching teams outside Europe's "big five" leagues.

Until Rangnick came along the club was its own worst enemy, hiring and selling players en masse during the summer. Now they have a far more settled side, with the only significant change being the coach.

When Roger Schmidt left to join Bayer Leverkusen he was replaced by Adi Hutter, a disciple of the Salzburg style of play. Hutter is something of an Austrian version of Rangnick, leading tiny Grodig out of the Erste Liga and into the Bundesliga, where they managed a highly credible third-place finish on their debut last term and a place in the Europa League qualifiers.

Massimo Bruno, a 20-year-old midfielder signed for €9million from Anderlecht, was the club's major signing of the summer, along with Peter Ankersen, 23, from Esbjerg and 19-year-old Senegalese midfielder Naby Keita from French side Istres.

Other newcomers are defender Benno Schmitz from Bayern Munich and left-sided midfielder Marcel Sabitzer, on loan from another Red Bull side, Leipzig.

Although Salzburg's summer outlay of €13m may seem modest, it was far more than the other nine Bundesliga clubs combined.

In fact, only two other clubs had spent any money at all before the competition kicked off on July 19, with Rapid Vienna investing €1.3m and Austria Vienna €0.97m.

The rest of the Bundesliga, including newly promoted Altach, have had to survive on a diet of free transfers and players promoted from their junior teams. Financial prudence and youth are the watchwords in Austrian domestic football where Rapid's squad has an average age of 23.2 and Wolfsberger are the oldest with 26.6 years.

The league format, long a source of dissatisfaction with the 10 teams playing each other four times a season, has again been under discussion. Rangnick suggested the whole structure should be knocked down and replaced with a new 14- or 16-team division in which all the major centres of the country were represented. Innsbruck, Linz and Klagenfurt will all be missing from the top flight this season.

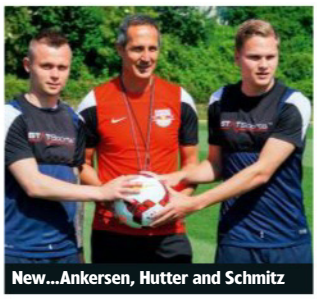
"I have a problem about playing the same opponents four times," says Rangnick.

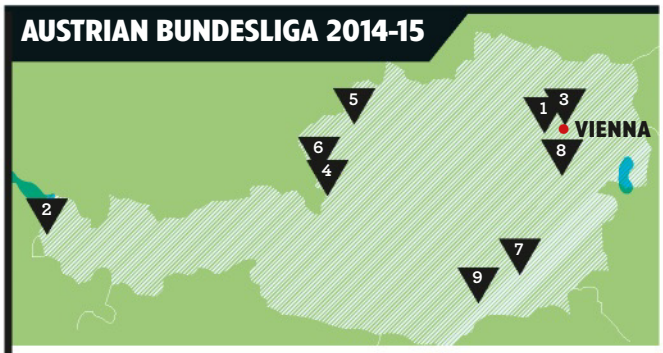
"I would prefer to play twice against Rapid, twice against Linz, twice against Klagenfurt, twice against Vorarlberg."

Rapid, who won the last of their 32 league titles in 2008, already seem to be in for a long, hard slog. They have sold the three players who provided 33 of their 63 goals last term and were thrashed 6-1 by Salzburg on the opening day of the new season.

Brian Homewood

> "I want to maintain Salzburg's playing philosophy, but with my way of being a coach and my ideas"
> Salzburg coach Adi Hutter


New...Ankersen, Hutter and Schmitz



1 Admira (Modling)
2 Altach
3 Austria Vienna
Rapid Vienna
4 Grodig
5 Ried
6 Salzburg
7 Sturm Graz
8 Wiener Neustadt
9 Wolfsberger

Young Belgian talent is the future

With even the biggest domestic sides lacking the necessary funds to bring in decent imports, most clubs have instead invested in youth academies to develop their own players – which in turn leads to a steady flow abroad of young talent every summer.

Among the key departures during this pre-season were Anderlecht duo Massimo Bruno and Cheikhou Kouyate, who moved to Salzburg and West Ham United respectively, with Standard Liege's Michy Batshuayi joining Marseille. But despite their loss of two key youngsters, Anderlecht still look to have a more than capable squad.

In 17-year-old midfielder Youri Tielemans they have the most gifted player to emerge from their academy since Vincent Kompany, while Dennis Praet shows signs of continuing maturity. There are other youngsters who have shown up well in the Viareggio Trophy in the last couple of seasons and Besnik Hasi's faith in youth served him well last term after he took over from John Van den Brom just before the play-offs. The Kosovo-Albanian went on to lead the club to a title that had looked out of the question for most of the season.

This term's championship already looks like Anderlecht's to lose, with Standard Liege and Club Brugge unlikely to be able to sustain a realistic challenge and no other club looking equipped for a tilt at the title.

Like Anderlecht, Standard have invested in youth and midfielder Francois Marquet is a prime example of the talent they have coming through. An appealing, and much-needed, arrival has been Celtic's 20-year-old striker Tony Watt on a five-year deal. Israeli coach Guy Luzon is hugely confident in his own ability and he will have learnt plenty from his first season in charge.

Challenge...Preud'homme of Club Brugge

Bright future...Anderlecht's 17-year-old Tielemans (left) with 20-year-old team-mates Frank Acheampong and Nathan Kabasele (right)

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED JULY 26, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY, 2015

Michel Preud'homme starts his first full season as boss of Club Brugge, for whom third place in the past two seasons is not good enough. Along with Eric Gerets, he is seen as a top-quality local coach but it will be interesting to see how he copes if Maxime Lestienne, Vadis Odjidja and Thomas Meunier have their way and all move on.

Genk coach Emilio Ferrera has already paid the price for failure and was sacked after the team lost 3-1 at Mechelen in their opening game of the league campaign. Ferrera had only been with the club since February, joining when Mario Been was dismissed after a disappointing run of results.

Zulte Waregem finished fourth last season and gained a Europa League spot despite an operating budget of less than €10million – €15m less than Gent who have a new stadium and a coach, Hein Vanhaezebrouck, with the ability to get the most out of a squad. Gent have also taken midfielder Sven Kums from Zulte Waregem.

Oostende are an ambitious club whose president Marc Coucke, CEO of Omega Pharma, has invested heavily, with Fernando Canesin and Jordan Lukaku arriving from Anderlecht, along with a number of experienced players. They are definitely one to watch.

John Chapman

BELGIAN PRO LEAGUE 2014-15

1 Anderlecht (Brussels)
2 Cercle Brugge Club Brugge (Bruges)
3 Charleroi
4 Genk
5 Gent (Ghent)
6 Kortrijk
7 Lierse (Lier)
8 Lokeren
9 Mechelen
10 Mouscron
11 Oostende
12 Standard Liege
13 Waasland-Beveren
14 Westerlo
15 Zulte Waregem

Champions replace boss after two games

Early exit...defending league champions Ludogorets replaced coach Stoev after a disappointing start to the new season

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED JULY 19, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY 31, 2015

Within two weeks of the new season getting underway, both the coach of the reigning league champions and the boss of the national team found themselves surplus to requirements in the Bulgarian top flight.

Ludogorets may be aiming for a fourth consecutive domestic title, but a 0-0 draw at home to Partizan Belgrade in the Champions League qualifiers saw coach Stoycho Stoev replaced by academy director Georgi Dermendzhiev.

Stoev took the club to the last 16 of the Europa League last term and also won the domestic double. He had replaced Ivaylo Petev after Ludogorets lost their opening game of the season to newly promoted Lyubimets last year and suffered a similar fate himself this term, being dismissed after just one win in five games (in all competitions) in a run that included a 1-0 loss at promoted Haskovo.

Luboslav Penev did not even stay in place for the start of the league season after taking charge of Botev in the summer. The national coach stepped down after a 4-0 win against Libertas of San Marino in the Europa League to concentrate on the country's Euro 2016 qualifying campaign. "I would fall short," said Penev of his bid to combine the two jobs. "I want to take the opportunity to thank the club, the players and the fans, who supported me from the first day."

Velislav Vutsov, who had been out of work for a year, replaced him, but Botev's European excursion ended in the next round against Austrian second-tier side St Polten.

CSKA Sofia and Litex Lovech also fell at the second qualifying stage of the Europa League, to Moldova's Zimbru Chisinau and Diosgyor of Hungary respectively.

CSKA went out on away goals and their coach Stoycho Mladenov has now experienced elimination – either on away goals or penalties – from European competition five times with CSKA without losing a game. He may, however, lose Algeria keeper Rais M'Bolhi, who had an impressive World Cup and has plenty of eager suitors.

Litex's exit from Europe increased the pressure on Krasimir Balakov, whose fine playing career is yet to be matched by his record as a coach. Having arrived in May – after a less than impressive track record in Switzerland, Croatia and Germany – it remains to be seen how long poor results will be accepted by club owner Grisha Ganchev, who is known for his lack of patience. The €2.5million sale of midfielder Simeon Slavchev to Sporting Lisbon will not have improved Balakov's chances.

Levski Sofia celebrated their centenary in May, but this season is their first without European football since 1990. Spanish coach Pepe Murcia, who was brought in to revive the club's fortunes in June, was sacked after just three matches in charge.

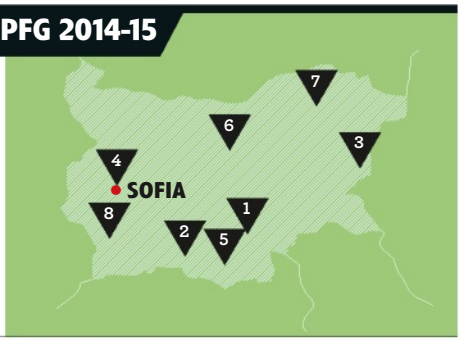
Rumen Paytashev

> "It is my fortune to make new squads and to be eliminated without defeats"
>
> CSKA coach Stoicho Mladenov, whose side were knocked out of the Europa League on away goals

Wanted...CSKA's Algeria keeper M'Bolhi

BULGARIAN A PFG 2014-15

1 Beroe (Stara Zagora)
2 Botev Plovdiv
Lokomotiv Plovdiv
3 Cherno More (Varna)
4 CSKA Sofia
Levski Sofia
Lokomotiv Sofia
Slavia Sofia
5 Haskovo
6 Litex (Lovech)
7 Ludogorets (Razgrad)
8 Marek (Dupnitsa)



Sparta look like a good bet

"A new season in a new kit" is the claim on billboards announcing that betting company Synot have replaced Gambrinus lager as the Czech top flight's main sponsor after 17 years. But on the pitch it looks like business as usual, with the smart money on Sparta Prague retaining their title.

One downside to the new deal is that the league now shares its name with Czech football's biggest-ever match-fixing scandal, after three officials of 1FC Synot – an ambitious south Moravian club, now known as Slovacko – were convicted of bribing referees, in 2006.

Match fixing is still a hot topic in the country, with Sparta owner Daniel Kretinsky accusing main rivals Viktoria Plzen of bribing officials. The allegations, which were presented to the Czech FA in 2012, came to court this June but were dismissed for a lack of evidence. However, the case has only heightened the rivalry between the country's two best teams.

Sparta completed an unprecedented treble in July, adding the Super Cup to last season's double with an emphatic 3-0 win over Plzen, thanks to goals from David Lafata, Ladislav Krejci and Michal Breznanik. And, if anything, coach Vitezslav Lavicka's side are even stronger this season.

Basle-bound goalkeeper Tomas Vaclik was the only significant departure, while Lavicka brought in striker Martin Nespor from Mlada Boleslav and defender Radoslav Kovac from Slovan Liberec.

Title winners in 2011 and 2013, Plzen remain Sparta's biggest challengers, but there are question marks and Dusan Uhrin Jr must stamp his authority on a squad built by his predecessor, Pavel Vrba, in his first full season as coach.

Eyes on the prize...new Sparta signing Kovac (in red) has been brought in to help the champions' defence of their double

Now 39, influential playmaker Pavel Horvath is showing his age and has announced that this will be his last season. Meanwhile, two ex-Plzen stars have returned from the German Bundesliga: attacking midfielder Vaclav Pilar on loan from Wolfsburg and wing-back Frantisek Rajtoral after his loan spell with Hanover.

A second Champions League spot has tempted several clubs to invest heavily, most notably Jablonec. Eleventh last season, the north Bohemian club have poached coach Jaroslav Silhavy from neighbouring Liberec and lured defender Tomas Hubschman from Shakhtar Donetsk and striker Tomas Jun of Austria Vienna back to their homeland.

Third last season, Mlada Boleslav remain in the hunt for a European place despite the retirement of midfielder David Jarolim. As a replacement, coach Karel Jarolim – who is David's father – has signed French-Senegalese midfielder Mickael Tavares.

Under new coach Samuel Slovak, Liberec should push for a European place again, despite the loss of Kovac to Sparta and Ukrainian attacking midfielder Serhiy Rybalka to Dynamo Kiev.

After a tumultuous spring, once-powerful Slavia Prague will be happy with mid-table. Following the misguided appointment of Dutch coach Alex Pastoor, Miroslav Beranek returns for his third spell in the dugout.

As far as the battle against relegation is concerned, Bohemians 1905 are among the teams that could be drawn into the scrap, along with promoted Hradec Kralove and Ceske Budejovice.

Sam Beckwith

> "You have days like that, but also ones when you cannot score no matter what you do"
>
> Sparta Prague's David Lafata, who scored five goals against Levadia Tallinn in a Champions League qualifier

KEY DATES

SEASON STARTED JULY 25, 2014

SEASON ENDS MAY 22, 2015

Back at Plzen...Pilar

CZECH FIRST LEAGUE 2014-15

1 Banik Ostrava
2 Bohemians 1905
Dukla Prague
Slavia Prague
Sparta Prague
3 Ceske Budejovice
4 Hradec Kralove
5 Jablonec
6 Mlada Boleslav
7 Pribram
8 Slovacko (Uherske Hradiste)
9 Slovan Liberec
10 Teplice
11 Viktoria Plzen
12 Vysocina Jihlava
13 Zbrojovka Brno

Copenhagen rebuild and come again

Making an impression...Copenhagen's Ghanaian midfielder Amartey (left) tussles with Jeppe Illum of Silkeborg

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED JULY 18, 2014
SEASON ENDS JUNE 6, 2015

A season without the Superliga title for perennial Danish champions Copenhagen is viewed as a disaster and brings revolution to the team. And so it proved this summer as a consequence of unheralded AaB from Aalborg winning the league last time out.

Even though returning coach Stale Solbakken managed to revive a poor campaign and claim a Champions League qualifying-round place, anywhere but first is nowhere for Denmark's wealthiest club. Eleven players had been ditched, with 10 new faces coming in, by the start of the new campaign and further changes are expected.

Solbakken enjoyed spectacular success in his first spell in charge at the Parken, from 2006 to 2011, and then suffered turbulent short periods of failure at Cologne and Wolverhampton Wanderers. His enigmatic style does not suit every taste, but Copenhagen supporters have good reason to trust his methods and the 2014-15 Superliga season will surely turn on whether the Norwegian can swiftly mould his new charges into a stable and consistent side.

It should help that three of the newcomers are current Denmark internationals: striker Andreas Cornelius, back from a miserable move to Cardiff City, goalkeeper Stephan Andersen, acquired from Real Betis, and central defender Mathias "Zanka" Jorgensen, who returns from PSV.

This particular trio reverse the usual talent drain from Danish domestic football to destinations such as Holland. Copenhagen's ability to pay decent wages is clearly one factor, but it is also happening at other clubs, with AaB taking striker Nicklas Helenius back on loan from Aston Villa and national team midfielder Thomas Enevoldsen returning on loan from Mechelen.

It is a change of emphasis to be welcomed if it proves a long-term factor rather than a blip. The Superliga needs young Danish talent in its ranks to go alongside the army of imports from across the globe.

It is not as though Solbakken and Copenhagen are ignoring those in the quest to return to the top spot, either. A particularly fascinating move has been for Argentinian midfielder Franco Mussis from Gimnasia. He has made a good early impression along with Daniel Amartey, a 19-year-old Ghanaian midfielder brought in from Djurgarden of Sweden, and on the wing they have found a berth for Belgian Steve De Ridder, who arrived from Utrecht.

Copenhagen's status as strong favourites for the title is likely to be tested by AaB, who have strengthened their squad under coach and Euro 92 winner Kent Nielsen. Brondby should also challenge, having acquired veteran Swedish striker Johan Elmander on a free from Galatasaray.

One of the delights of Danish domestic football is how small-town teams can rise quickly to the elite level of the Superliga. They are known as "comet clubs" and the latest is Hobro, who won promotion last season. Based in a tiny town of just 11,736 in the far north of Jutland, they began this season in the top flight with a 2-1 victory in Odense at OB. Coach Jonas Dal expects them to do well in their first Superliga season and mirror the exploits of another small side, Vestsjaelland, who defied the doubters to stay up last time round.

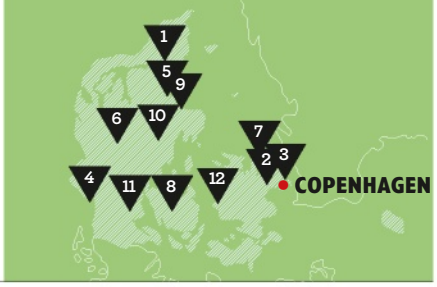
There are fears, however, for Nordsjaelland, who have been a significant force in the Danish game for the past few seasons but whose superb coach Kasper Hjulmand has been poached by Bundesliga side Mainz. His replacement is the relatively unknown Olafur Kristjansson, who has never managed outside his native country but did win the Icelandic title with former club Breiablik.

Jim Holden

Title defence...AaB coach Nielsen

DANISH SUPERLIGA 2014-15

1 AaB (Aalborg)
2 Brondby
3 Copenhagen
4 Esbjerg
5 Hobro
6 Midtjyland (Herning)
7 Nordsjaelland (Farum)
8 OB (Odense)
9 Randers
10 Silkeborg
11 SonderjyskE (Haderslev)
12 Vestsjaelland (Slagelse)



FROM THE MAKERS OF

WorldSoccer®

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THE NEW SEASON IN ENGLAND

ON SALE NOW!

Young English talent at a premium

Shaw thing...Manchester United paid a world record for a teenager to bring the 19-year-old Southampton full-back into new manager Van Gaal's squad

The summer friendlies in the USA – where 109,000 watched Manchester United play Liverpool in an exhibition game in Michigan – demonstrated the financial power and global reach of the Premier League. It also allowed the Premier League, via its TV mouthpiece Sky Sports, to give itself a pat on the back as the self-proclaimed "best league in the world".

Yet if the World Cup is an accurate barometer of global football talent, the stars went elsewhere this summer. Alexis Sanchez, a £35million signing by Arsenal, was the only World Cup star to land on these shores. There were other big names – deals to take Diego Costa and Cesc Fabregas to Chelsea were done early in the window – but the overall balance was marginal.

Luis Suarez, lest we forget, last year's runaway choice as player of the season, left Liverpool for Barcelona. Chelsea somehow managed to persuade Paris Saint-Germain to pay £50m for David Luiz, while Real Madrid won the battle for the likes of James Rodriguez and Toni Kroos.

So, instead of making a beeline for global stars, Premier League clubs have paid a premium for English talent.

United paid Southampton an initial £27m for Luke Shaw, the teenage left-back who made his England debut earlier this year. The deal, which included a reported £130,000 a week in wages, made Shaw the world's most expensive teenager but attracted criticism from Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho, who complained: "If we pay to a 19-year-old boy what we were being asked for, to sign Luke Shaw, we are dead.

"We would have killed our stability with financial fair play and killed the stability in our dressing room."

Down the M65, Liverpool paid Southampton £25m for Adam Lallana. Even though fee was pushed up in part by Bournemouth's entitlement to a quarter of the proceeds, it still represents a remarkable surcharge for buying English players.

Similarly, Arsenal, having previously done business with Southampton for Theo Walcott and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, paid £16m for teenage defender Calum Chambers, who made just 23 first-team appearances for the Saints.

Further down the food chain,

KEY DATES

SEASON STARTS AUGUST 16, 2014

SEASON ENDS MAY 24, 2015

relegated Fulham paid £11m for Ross McCormack of Leeds United. McCormack scored 29 goals in last season's Championship, and may be just what the doctor ordered to propel Fulham back to the Premier League, but the fee dwarfs anything else paid by other teams in the second tier.

Southampton's sale of almost £100m of players – including Rickie Lambert and Dejan Lovren to Liverpool – was either good business or asset-stripping, depending on how you view the Swiss owners' long-term intentions. The Liebherr family insist they have no intention of selling the club, but back in January they made a point of insisting there were no plans to sell any players.

The club have also said they will not sell French international Morgan Schneiderlin, despite the player's anger at being a refused a move to Tottenham Hotspur and a reunion with his former boss at Southampton, Mauricio Pochettino. That Schneiderlin was so keen to leave a club that finished eighth last season for a club two places above them indicates the gulf that now exists between the top six clubs and the rest.

Tottenham and Manchester United have genuine ambitions to return to the top four, although Spurs chairman Daniel Levy would be wise to stick with a manager for more than six months in order to achieve the stability required for a genuine challenge.

United's credentials are hard to determine. New coach Louis Van Gaal represents a genuine break with Alex Ferguson after the failed experiment with Ferguson's anointed successor, David Moyes, but the Dutchman's ambitious tactical changes will need time to take effect.

United can afford to allow Van Gaal some leeway. A new £750m kit deal with adidas represents a world-record milestone in commercial deals and will allow United to attract world-class players irrespective of whether they are competing in the Champions League or not.

Of last season's top four, only Arsenal made a significant dent in their transfer budget, with no departures to compensate for the purchases of Sanchez, Chambers, Chile goalkeeper David Ospina and French full-back Mathieu Debuchy.

Champions Manchester City's only major deal has been the £12m acquisition of Brazilian Fernando from Porto. Liverpool's spending was underwritten by the sale of Suarez, while Chelsea's deals were paid for by the fees received for Luiz and Romelu Lukaku, who brought in £28m from Everton.

Impact...Liverpool will be hoping for great things from England star Raheem Sterling

Mourinho had the option to bring Lukaku back to Stamford Bridge after last season's loan to Everton, but felt the offer was too good to turn down. Instead, he welcomed back Didier Drogba, two years after his penalty won the Champions League Final in Munich.

Chelsea continue to have a string of highly rated young players on loan at clubs throughout Europe, although few are likely to make it back to the Chelsea first team under arch-pragmatist Mourinho. One exception is keeper Thibaut Courtois, who was outstanding for Atletico Madrid last season and has been recalled to London. His tussle with incumbent Petr Cech for top spot could be one of the storylines of the season.

> "This is a league where the top team plays the bottom team and on any given day you can lose"
> Liverpool's Brendan Rodgers

While Chelsea continue to push the boundaries of the loan system, a delicious irony has seen Manchester City sign former Chelsea midfielder Frank Lampard on a temporary loan until he joins MLS club New York City later in the season. Lampard was one of the victims of Mourinho's second-season clear-out, along with Ashley Cole. Chelsea look far stronger than last season, not least in the attacking third, and will be expected to challenge City all the way.

While last season's title race looked wide open, this year's campaign looks more likely to be focused on the top two. Suarez-less Liverpool may find themselves distracted by the Champions League, while United are in transition under Van Gaal. The main question is whether Arsenal have the strength in depth to challenge them over the course of the season.

Gavin Hamilton

Investment...Everton turned last year's loan deal for Lukaku into a permanent move

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE 2014-15

1 Arsenal (London)
Chelsea
Crystal Palace
QPR
Tottenham Hotspur
West Ham United
2 Aston Villa (Birmingham)
3 Burnley
4 Everton (Liverpool)
Liverpool
5 Hull City
6 Leicester City
7 Manchester City
Manchester United
8 Newcastle United
9 Southampton
10 Stoke City
11 Sunderland
12 Swansea City
13 West Bromwich Albion

Team-by-team guide to the season

Flying start...French striker Riviere will hope to hit the ground running for Newcastle

ARSENAL

Manager: Arsene Wenger
Key arrivals: Calum Chambers (Southampton), Mathieu Debuchy (Newcastle United), David Ospina (Nice, Fra), Alexis Sanchez (Barcelona, Spa).
Key departures: Nicklas Bendtner (released), Johan Djorou (Hamburg, Ger), Park Chu-young (released), Bacary Sagna (Manchester City).
Sanchez and other bold signings give Arsenal the feel of a team who will challenge for the title. Last season's FA Cup victory ended the trophy drought, but they still came up short in the league despite an impressive autumn, with injuries exposing the depth of the squad. Need to improve results against title rivals to be serious contenders.

ASTON VILLA

Manager: Paul Lambert
Key arrivals: Joe Cole (West Ham United), Kieran Richardson (Fulham), Philippe Senderos (Fulham).
Key departures: Marc Albrighton (Leicester City), Jordan Bowery (Rotherham United), Nathan Delfouneso (Blackpool), *Nicklas Helenius (Aalborg, Den)*.
Uninspiring signings, no chief executive, disgruntled fans, an unpopular manager and an American owner looking to sell – not an ideal scenario for Villa, who could easily get dragged into a relegation scrap. However, Roy Keane's arrival as assistant manager could prove interesting.

BURNLEY

Manager: Sean Dyche
Key arrivals: Matt Gilks (Blackpool), Lukas Jutkiewicz (Middlesbrough), Michael Kightly (Stoke City), Steven Reid (West Bromwich Albion), Marvin Sordell (Bolton Wanderers), Matt Taylor (West Ham United).
Key departures: Chris Baird (West Bromwich Albion), Junior Stanislas (Bournemouth).
Unlikely to be able to play the attack-minded football that saw them win automatic promotion from the Championship. Dyche will stick with the nucleus of last season's side and hope that team spirit can compensate for a lack of genuine quality as they start as favourites to go straight back down.

CHELSEA

Manager: Jose Mourinho
Key arrivals: Diego Costa (Atletico Madrid, Spa), Thibaut Courtois (Atletico Madrid, Spa, loan return), Didier Drogba (Galatasaray, Tur), Cesc Fabregas (Barcelona, Spa), Filipe Luis (Atletico Madrid, Spa).
Key departures: Demba Ba (Besiktas, Tur), Ashley Cole (Roma, Ita), Samuel Eto'o (released), Frank Lampard (New York City, USA), David Luiz (Paris Saint-Germain, Fra), Romelu Lukaku (Everton).
Pushed City and Liverpool all the way last season before stalling in the run-in. The signings Costa and Fabregas will add goals, while a summer clear-out of many of the team's youngsters – permanent and on loan – has allowed Mourinho to stamp his mark in the second season of his second spell. Huge fees for Luiz and Lukaku represent good business while Petr Cech's days look numbered following the return of Courtois.

CRYSTAL PALACE

Manager: Tony Pulis
Key arrivals: Fraizer Campbell (Cardiff City), Brede Hangeland (Fulham).
Key departures: Neil Alexander (Hearts, Sco), Jose Campana (Sampdoria, Ita), Kagisho Dikgacoi (Cardiff City), Danny Gabbidon (released).
Pulis engineered a remarkable transformation last season as his well-drilled side pulled away from the relegation places and finished in 11th spot. Further reinforcements will be needed to maintain last season's progress.

EVERTON

Manager: Roberto Martinez
Key arrivals: Gareth Barry (Manchester City), Muhamed Besic (Ferencvaros, Hun) Romelu Lukaku (Chelsea).
Key departures: Magaye Gueye (Millwall).
After last season's loan spell at Goodison, Lukaku's arrival on a permanent deal is a major boost, albeit an expensive one, as Martinez continues his transformation of Everton's playing style. Top six is the ambition again.

Permanent...Ince has joined Hull

HULL CITY

Manager: Steve Bruce
Key arrivals: Tom Ince (Blackpool), Jake Livermore (Tottenham Hotspur), Harry Maguire (Sheffield United), Andrew Robertson (Dundee United), Robert Snodgrass (Norwich City).
Key departures: Matty Fryatt (Nottingham Forest), Abdoulaye Faye (released), Robert Koren (Melbourne City, Aus).
The gamble on big expenditure last January paid off as Hull stayed clear of the relegation zone and reached the FA Cup Final, taking Arsenal to extra time. In Europe for the first time but unlikely to suffer from second-season syndrome.

LEICESTER CITY

Manager: Nigel Pearson
Key arrivals: Marc Albrighton (Aston Villa), Leonardo Ulloa (Brighton & Hove Albion), Matthew Upson (Brighton & Hove Albion).
Key departures: Lloyd Dyer (Watford), Sean St Ledger (released).
Runaway winners of last season's championship and back in the top flight after a 10-year absence that included a spell in League One. Pearson's no-nonsense approach will target 18th place and may just be enough.

LIVERPOOL

Manager: Brendan Rodgers
Key arrivals: Emre Can (Bayer Leverkusen, Ger), Adam Lallana (Southampton), Rickie Lambert (Southampton), Dejan Lovren (Southampton), Lazar Markovic (Benfica, Por).
Key departures: *Luis Alberto (Malaga, Spa)*, *Iago Aspas (Sevilla, Spa)*, Luis Suarez (Barcelona, Spa), *Andre Wisdom (West Bromwich Albion)*.
Suarez is irreplaceable, so the additions of Can, Lallana, Lambert and Markovic will give Rodgers more options as Liverpool take on the extra commitment of midweek Champions League football. Lovren will tighten things up at the back, but without their talisman it's hard to see a challenge to City and Chelsea for the title.

■ PLAYERS IN *ITALICS* ARE ON LOAN ■ FOR UP-TO-DATE TRANSFER NEWS GO TO WWW.WORLDSOCCER.COM/FEATURES/ENGLAND-PREMIER-LEAGUE

MANCHESTER CITY

Manager: Manuel Pellegrini
Key arrivals: Willy Caballero (Malaga, Spa), Fernando (Porto, Por), *Frank Lampard (New York City, USA)*, Bacary Sagna (Arsenal).
Key departures: Joleon Lescott (West Bromwich Albion), Costel Pantilimon (Sunderland), Jack Rodwell (Sunderland).
A low-key summer, with Fernando reinforcing midfield and Sagna providing a new option at right-back. Yaya Toure's agent made noises over the summer, amid suggestions that PSG might tempt him to France, but the player appears happy to stay – for now.

MANCHESTER UNITED

Manager: Louis Van Gaal
Key arrivals: Ander Herrera (Athletic Bilbao, Spa), Luke Shaw (Southampton).
Key departures: Bebe (Benfica, Por), Alexander Buttner (Dynamo Moscow, Rus), Patrice Evra (Juventus, Ita), Rio Ferdinand (QPR), Nemanja Vidic (Internazionale, Ita).
Major change at Old Trafford. Big-money purchases have arrived but there are still major gaps following departures of the old guard. Van Gaal is set to switch to a 3-5-2, as with Holland at the World Cup, but he needs a commanding centre-back for the formation to work.

NEWCASTLE UNITED

Manager: Alan Pardew
Key arrivals: Remy Cabella (Montpellier, Fra), Jack Colback (Sunderland), Siem De Jong (Ajax, Hol), *Facundo Ferreyra (Shakhtar Donetsk, Ukr)*, Daryl Janmaat (Feyenoord, Hol), Emmanuel Riviere (Monaco, Fra).
Key departures: Romain Amalfitano (Dijon, Fra), Shola Ameobi (released), Mathieu Debuchy (Arsenal), Dan Gosling (Bournemouth), *Sylvain Marveaux (Guingamp, Fra)*, James Tavernier (Wigan Athletic).
Last season's campaign went off the boil following the sale of Yohan Cabaye to PSG in January. Cabella could fill the creative void, while Janmaat is a useful replacement for Debuchy. Europe is a realistic target.

QPR

Manager: Harry Redknapp
Key arrivals: Steven Caulker (Cardiff City), Rio Ferdinand (Man United), Jordan Mutch (Cardiff City).
Key departures: Yossi Benayoun (Maccabi Haifa, Isr), *Samba Diakite (Al Ittihad, Sau)*, Andrew Johnson (released), Stephane Mbia (released).
Promoted via the play-offs and cleared much of the deadwood that afflicted the relegated side two seasons ago. Transfer activity has been more responsible this time around but it will still be a struggle to stay up.

SOUTHAMPTON

Manager: Ronald Koeman
Key arrivals: *Ryan Bertrand (Chelsea)*, Graziano Pelle (Feyenoord, Hol), Dusan Tadic (Twente, Hol).
Key departures: Calum Chambers (Arsenal), Adam Lallana (Liverpool), Rickie Lambert (Liverpool), Dejan Lovren (Liverpool), Luke Shaw (Manchester United).
Hard to dismiss the claims of asset-stripping, with so many of last season's side sold. Pelle was a prolific scorer for Koeman in Holland but the new boss faces an uphill struggle.

STOKE CITY

Manager: Mark Hughes
Key arrivals: Phil Bardsley (Sunderland), Bojan Krkic (Barcelona, Spa), Mame Diouf (Hanover, Ger), Steve Sidwell (Fulham).
Key departures: Matthew Etherington (released), Michael Kightly (Burnley).
Last season Hughes adapted the team to the first campaign of the post-Tony Pulis era. Bojan and Diouf are intriguing signings and should keep Stoke in mid-table.

SUNDERLAND

Manager: Gus Poyet
Key arrivals: Costel Pantilimon (Manchester City), Jordi Gomez (Wigan Athletic), Jack Rodwell (Manchester City), Patrick Van Aanholt (Chelsea).
Key departures: Phil Bardsley (Stoke City), Jack Colback (Newcastle United), Craig Gardner (West Bromwich Albion), Ignacio Scocco (Newell's Old Boys, Arg).
Poyet engineered an impressive league turnaround last season, with progress to the League Cup Final. Marquee signing Rodwell will be a key figure if he stays fit.

SWANSEA CITY

Manager: Garry Monk
Key arrivals: Lukasz Fabianski (Arsenal), Bafetimbi Gomis (Lyon, Fra), Jefferson Montero (Morelia, Mex), Gylfi Sigurdsson (Tottenham).
Key departures: Ben Davies (Tottenham), *Michu (Napoli)*, Alejandro Pozuelo (Rayo Vallecano, Spa), Michel Vorm (Tottenham).
Endured a dreadful run of poor form last season under Michael Laudrup as the Europa League campaign took its toll. The internal promotion of Monk was a gamble but he restored the Swansea "way". Losing striker Wilfried Bony would be a blow, but they have enough to avoid a relegation battle.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

Manager: Mauricio Pocchetino
Key arrivals: Ben Davies (Swansea City), Eric Dier (Sporting Lisbon, Por), Michel Vorm (Swansea City).
Key departures: Gylfi Sigurdsson (Swansea City).
Pocchetino arrives from Southampton but will need time to apply his tactical ideas. A quiet summer on the transfer front after last year's Bale-fuelled spending spree, but fans still expect to be challenging for the top four. On the evidence so far, that is unlikely.

WEST BROM

Manager: Alan Irvine
Key arrivals: Chris Baird (Burnley), Jason Davidson (Heracles, Hol), Christian Gamboa (Rosenborg, Nor), Craig Gardner (Sunderland), Brown Ideye (Dynamo Kiev, Ukr), Joleon Lescott (Manchester City), Sebastien Pocognoli (Hanover, Ger), *Andre Wisdom (Liverpool)*.
Key departures: George Thorne (Derby County), Steven Reid (Burnley).
The inexperienced Irvine was a surprise choice to replace Pepe Mel, who steered the club to safety after being relegation candidates for most of last season's campaign. Decent transfer activity this summer but could still struggle.

Old irons...ex-West Ham pair Ferdinand and manager Redknapp are reunited at QPR

WEST HAM UNITED

Manager: Sam Allardyce
Key arrivals: Aaron Cresswell (Ipswich Town), *Carl Jenkinson (Arsenal)*, Enner Valencia (Pachuca. Mex), Mauro Zarate (Velez Sarsfield, Arg).
Key departures: Joe Cole (Aston Villa), Alou Diarra (released), George McCartney (released).
The relationship between Allardyce and the owners remains a marriage of convenience as they plot a move to Olympic stadium in 2016. Flirted with relegation last season before pulling away and may do so again.

Big two will be out on their own again

If you are looking for job security as a coach, Ligue 1 is not the place to be. Of the 20 clubs starting the new campaign in the French top flight, seven of them kick off with a new man at the helm. That's an incredible 35 per cent who have made a managerial switch since last season ended.

The highest profile change took place at Monaco, where last term's big-spending league runners-up decided that a second-place finish behind the equally financially muscular Paris Saint-Germain was not good enough. Not even in their first season back in the top flight. Goodbye, then, to Claudio Ranieri, and hello to Leonardo Jardim.

The 40-year-old Portuguese arrives in the French championship after a successful one-year spell with Sporting Lisbon, who he led to a second-place league finish playing an attacking style of football that clearly impressed Monaco's top brass. What targets they have set Jardim are unknown, but there's no chance they'll happily settle for another second spot.

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTS AUGUST 8, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY 23, 2015

There are, however, a number of significant stumbling blocks for Jardim to overcome if he is to clinch the title in 2015.

The biggest problem may be holding on to prolific goalscorer Radamel Falcao, who could well follow fellow Colombian James Rodriguez out of the door. Falcao missed much of last season through injury, which should mean he will be rested and hungry this campaign. He will clearly be a real asset to Monaco if he stays but will need to be on top form to compensate for the loss of Rodriguez to Real Madrid.

The midfielder was one of the standout performers in Brazil this summer, with six goals for his country, and is arguably the hottest new talent in the game at the age of 23. Monaco will need to re-invest wisely if they are to get their noses ahead of PSG.

Despite being rapped on the knuckles by UEFA for breaking their fairplay rules and having spending restrictions subsequently imposed, Paris Saint-Germain still have by far the strongest squad in France.

> "It was a difficult decision. It's never easy when the results are good. But we believe that, at this stage of the project, we need to find a new dynamic"
>
> Monaco vice-president Vasim Vasilyev on appointing a new coach

Defender Alex and striker Jeremy Menez may both have left for Milan, but neither represents an insurmountable loss. The arrival of David Luiz from Chelsea for a sum that could rise to £50million sees him link up with fellow Brazilian central defender Thiago Silva and means coach Laurent Blanc will have an even stronger set of players at his disposal.

With UEFA sanctions meaning the French title holders will only be allowed a 21-man Champions League squad, rather than the standard 25, it may be that PSG will tacitly accept that competing for the ultimate European honour is beyond them this campaign. And that would undoubtedly be bad news for Monaco's title aspirations.

PSG, meanwhile, will take the sanctions on the chin, while also trying to come to terms with losing wonderkid Kingsley Coman to Juventus. The highly rated 18-year-old midfielder opted to sign a five-year deal with the Italian champions after playing just four first-team games for PSG.

Big-money transfers have not exactly been the rage in France this close season. Apart from the gargantuan Luiz fee paid by PSG, large deals have been conspicuous by their absence.

Marseille handed over €5m to Rennes for the signature of midfielder Romain Alessandrini. But if the south-coast club really wants to re-establish itself at France's top table, new coach Marcelo Bielsa will have to work some managerial

In demand...new Monaco boss Jardim (right) may have a tough task holding on to fit-again Colombian striker Falcao

magic as the rest of his squad has not altered radically from the group that finished in sixth last season – 29 points behind the champions.

Bielsa has a big reputation, despite his last job with Athletic Bilbao ending disappointingly, and the Argentinian arrives in France on a two-year contract with Pep Guardiola having claimed he is "the best manager in the world". Bielsa will have to be to haul Marseille back up into genuine title contention.

While nobody is touting Lille's Rene Girard as the top boss on the planet, there is no doubt he is a fine coach in his own right. Having led lowly Montpellier to the title in 2012, he took over at Lille last July and led his new team to a highly respectable third place.

Lille will never be a fashionable club, but they are a very well-run outfit with a fine new ground and plenty of ambition. With Manchester City's highly rated midfielder Marcos Lopes arriving on a season-long loan and a stable group of players to call on, it will be interesting to see whether they can kick on again this season.

Having added Lorient striker Kevin Monet-Paquet to their ranks, Saint-Etienne have been more than reliable performers under Christophe Galtier in recent times and may be worth keeping an eye on. Elsewhere, Bordeaux have former France full-back Willy Sagnol at the helm in his first job as a club boss, while Lyon also have a new coach in the former Reims man Hubert Fournier. While these clubs may harbour ambitions of tweaking the noses of Paris and Monaco, the likelihood that they can actually do any more than that is remote.

Pressure...promoted Lens (red and yellow) and Caen may struggle in the top flight

It may well be that neutrals find the battle to avoid the drop more gripping than the race for the title. Last season, just six points separated 12th and 18th spot – the first relegation position – and it could be just as tight again, with Evian, Nantes, Rennes and Montpellier all wary of slipping into trouble, along with last term's French Cup winners, Guingamp.

Promoted Metz and Caen will hope they have enough firepower to avoid returning from where they came. The third promoted club, Lens, meanwhile, had to face an anxious wait to see whether they would be allowed to compete in Ligue 1 at all.

Budgetary concerns were highlighted by the government body that regulates a Ligue 1 club's ability to meet its financial commitments for the coming season and Lens breathed a huge sigh of relief when they were finally given the green light to take their place at the top table.

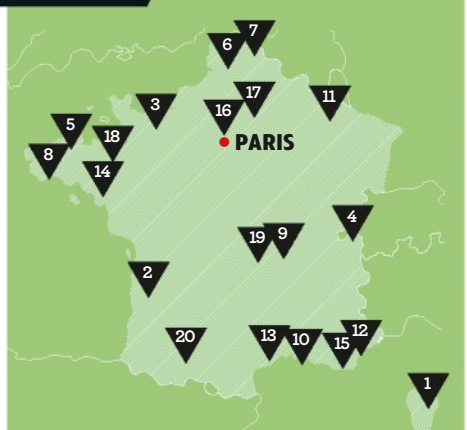
Howard Johnson

Impressive...Lille coach Girard

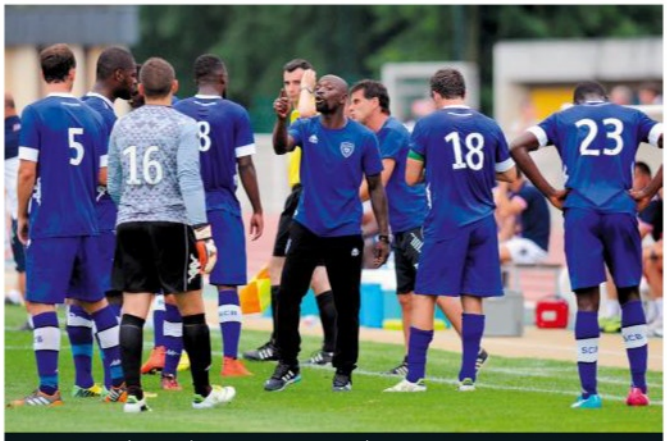
New era...Alessandrini will look to spark a Marseille revival under Bielsa

FRENCH LIGUE 1 2014-15

1 Bastia
2 Bordeaux
3 Caen
4 Evian (Annecy)
5 Guingamp
6 Lens
7 Lille
8 Lorient
9 Lyon
10 Marseille
11 Metz
12 Monaco
13 Montpellier
14 Nantes
15 Nice
16 Paris Saint-Germain
17 Reims
18 Rennes
19 Saint-Etienne
20 Toulouse



Team-by-team guide to the season


In charge...Bastia's rookie coach Makelele lets his team know exactly what he wants

BASTIA

Coach: Claude Makelele
Key arrivals: *Alphonse Areola (Paris Saint-Germain),* Floyd Ayite (Reims), Luka Kikabidze (Lokomotiv Tbilisi, Geo), Mathieu Peybernes (Sochaux).
Key departures: Fethi Harek (Nimes), Wahbi Khazri (Bordeaux), Toifilou Maoulida (Nimes).
Frederic Hantz pushed the little Corsican outfit to a superb 10th-place finish last season but opted not to continue after a supposed dispute with the club over his backroom staff. French playing legend Makelele has a tough act to follow in his first job as head coach.

BORDEAUX

Coach: Willy Sagnol
Key arrivals: Wahbi Khazri (Bastia), Nicolas Pallois (Niort).
Key departures: David Bellion (Red Star), Henrique (Fluminense, Bra), Guillaume Hoarau (released).
Bordeaux finished seventh for the second consecutive season but coach Francis Gillot walked away, leaving the door open for former international Sagnol to take over. European qualification would be a great achievement.

CAEN

Coach: Patrice Garande
Key arrivals: Julien Feret (Rennes), Florian Raspentino (Marseille), Remy Vercoutre (Lyon).
Key departures: Thomas Bosmel (Arles), Faycal Fajr (Elche, Spa).
Back in the big time after a two-year absence, Caen will be looking for survival and nothing more. The loss of Fajr won't help.

EVIAN

Coach: Pascal Dupraz
Key arrivals: Jesper Juelsgaard (Midtjylland, Den), Benjamin Leroy (Tours).
Key departures: Kevin Berigaud (Montpellier), Diaranke Fofana (Universitatea Cluj, Rom), Hugo Konongo (Clermont).
After narrowly avoiding the drop last time, Evian will be looking over their shoulder again.

GUINGAMP

Coach: Jocelyn Gourvennec
Key arrivals: Maxime Baca (Lorient), Lars Jacobsen (Copenhagen, Den), Jonas Lossl (Midtjylland, Den), *Sylvain Marveaux (Newcastle United, Eng).*
Key departures: Fatih Atik (released), Paul Babiloni (Ajaccio), Steeven Langil (Mouscron, Blg).
Last season was a huge success for promoted Guingamp as they won the French Cup and avoided relegation. Watch out for "second-season syndrome" here.

LENS

Coach: Antoine Kombouare
Key arrivals: *Alphonse Areola (Paris Saint-Germain)*, *Marcel Tisserand (Monaco).*
Key departures: Samuel Atrous (released).
Promoted Lens made it into Ligue 1 by the skin of their teeth after being threatened with a ban due to financial irregularities.

LILLE

Coach: Rene Girard
Key arrivals: Sebastien Corchia (Sochaux), *Marcos Lopes (Manchester City, Eng).*
Key departures: Anice Badri (Mouscron, Blg), Julian Michel (released).
Lille's first season under former Montpellier boss Girard was an unqualified successs as they finished third. World Cup sensation Divock Origi was sold to Liverpool for £10m but loaned back for the forthcoming season.

LORIENT

Coach: Sylvain Ripoli
Key arrivals: Benjamin Jeannot (Nancy), Vincent Le Goff (Istres), Walid Mesloub (Le Havre).
Key departures: Jordan Ayew (Marseille), Maxime Baca (Guingamp), Gregory Bourillon (Reims), Kevin Monnet-Paquet (Saint-Etienne).
Lorient are without Christian Gourcuff after three spells and a combined total of 25 years in charge. He fell out with the owner and was replaced by his former assistant, Ripoli.

New challenge...Marseille boss Bielsa

LYON

Coach: Hubert Fournier
Key arrivals: Christophe Jallet (PSG), Lindsay Rose (Valenciennes).
Key departures: Jimmy Briand (released), Bafetimbi Gomis (Swansea City, Eng), Naby Sarr (Sporting Lisbon, Por), Remy Vercoutre (Caen).
Fournier arrived from Reims to replace Remi Garde and he will do well to replicate last term's fifth place, especially without Gomis' firepower.

Tough times ahead...Danish signing Juelsgaard faces a season of toil with Evian

PLAYERS IN *ITALICS* ARE ON LOAN ■ FOR ALL THE UP-TO-DATE TRANSFER NEWS IN LIGUE 1 GO TO WWW.WORLDSOCCER.COM/FEATURES/FRANCE-LA-LIGUE

Rennes signing...Andre

MARSEILLE

Coach: Marcelo Bielsa
Key arrivals: Romain Alessandrini (Rennes), Michy Batshuayi (Standard Liege, Blg).
Key departures: Larry Azouni (Nimes), Souleymane Diawara (released), Florian Raspentino (Caen).
With former Argentina boss Bielsa at the helm Marseille will be looking to mount a title challenge. Their lack of financial muscle will weigh against them, though.

METZ

Coach: Albert Cartier
Key arrivals: Cheick Doukoure (Lorient), Juan Manuel Falcon (Zamora, Ven), Guirane N'Daw (Asteras, Gre), Jose Luis Palomino (Argentinos Juniors, Arg), Jonathan Rivierez (Le Havre).
Key departures: Thibaut Bourgeois (Bastia), Eduardo (retired), Alhassane Keita (Lierse, Blg).
Last season's Ligue 2 champions were in the third tier as recently as 2013. If anyone can help retain top-flight status it is coach Cartier.

MONACO

Coach: Leonardo Jardim
Key arrivals: Aymen Abdennour (Toulouse).
Key departures: Eric Abidal (Olympiakos, Gre), James Rodriguez (Real Madrid, Spa), Emmanuel Riviere (Newcastle United, Eng).
Much-travelled Portuguese coach Jardim takes over from Claudio Ranieri for the new season knowing that nothing but the title will satisfy.

MONTPELLIER

Coach: Rolland Courbis
Key arrivals: Kevin Berigaud (Evian), Paul Lasne (AC Ajaccio).
Key departures: Remy Cabella (Newcastle United, England), Emanuel Herrera (Emelec, Ecu), Jonathan Tinhan (Istres).
A disappointing 15th place last season saw the 2012 champions fending off relegation. With star turn Cabella gone, things may not be any easier this campaign.

NANTES

Coach: Michel Der Zakarian
Key arrivals: Itay Shechter (Hapoel Tel Aviv, Isr).
Key departures: Filip Djordjevic (Lazio, Ita), Adrien Trebel (Standard Liege, Blg).
Nantes managed to retain their Ligue 1 status at the end of their first season back in the top flight. After finishing in 13th place the objective will simply be to kick on.

NICE

Coach: Claude Puel
Key arrivals: Niklas Hult (Elfsborg, Swe), Julien Vercauteren (Lierse, Blg).
Key departures: David Ospina (Arsenal, Eng), Nemanja Pejcinovic (Lokomotiv Moscow, Rus).
After being touted as potential rivals to the big boys, Nice had a catastrophic campaign last time out and survived relegation by the skin of their teeth. Much more will be expected of Puel's boys this season.

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN

Coach: Laurent Blanc
Key arrivals: *Serge Aurier (Toulouse)*, David Luiz (Chelsea, Eng).
Key departures: Alex (Milan, Ita), Kingsley Coman (Juventus, Ita), Christophe Jallet (Lyon), Jeremy Menez (Milan, Ita).
The champions will again be the team to beat. They have kept the core members of their squad, so the rest will have it all to do again.

REIMS

Coach: Jean-Luc Vasseur
Key arrivals: Gregory Bourillon (Lorient), Antoine Conte (Paris Saint-Germain), Benjamin Moukandjo (Nancy).
Key departures: Floyd Ayite (Bastia), Jonathan Kodjia (Angers), Grzegorz Krychowiak (Sevilla, Spa).
Having lost coach Hubert Fournier to Lyon it is likely that Reims will be looking for another solid performance to match their 11th-place finish last time around. They look capable of that if new coach Vasseur beds in well.

Challengers...Monaco newcomer Abdennour with team-mate Dimitar Berbatov

RENNES

Coach: Philippe Montanier
Key arrivals: Benjamin Andre (AC Ajaccio), Pedro Henrique (Zurich, Swi), Mexer (Nacional, Por).
Key departures: Romain Alessandrini (Marseille), Julien Feret (Caen), Jonathan Pitroipa (Al Jazira, UAE).
Did not pull up any trees last season and it is hard to see them doing anything spectacular this time.

SAINT-ETIENNE

Coach: Christophe Galtier
Key arrivals: Kevin Monnet-Paquet (Lorient).
Key departures: Eirik Birkelund (Brann, Nor), Lynel Kitambala (Charleroi, Blg), Jean-Pascal Mignot (Sochaux).
A fourth-place finish and Europa League qualification confirmed Galtier's credentials. Expect another impressive season.

In at Saint-Etienne...Monnet-Paquet

TOULOUSE

Coach: Alain Casanova
Key arrivals: Dragos Grigore (Dinamo Bucharest, Rom), Aleksandar (Jagodina, Ser).
Key departures: Aymen Abdennour (Monaco), *Serge Aurier (PSG)*, Eden Ben Basat (Maccabi Tel-Aviv, Isr), Jonathan Zebina (released).
It was "situation normal" last season as they finished in typical mid-table obscurity. They would surely settle for the same again this time around.

World Cup boost for Bundesliga

The 2014-15 Bundesliga is sure to be a special campaign following the *Nationalmannschaft*'s imperious triumph at the World Cup.

The euphoria generated by the national team's first world title for 24 long and frustrating years is showing no sign of abating. The 52nd edition of the German championship will be a unique occasion to celebrate their heroes, cash in commercially, turn even more kids onto football and further raise the profile of the country's number one sport.

As a consequence of Manuel Neuer's saves, the goals of Thomas Muller and Mario Gotze, and the classy midfield prompting of Toni Kroos and Bastian Schweinsteiger, football Deutschland-style is now money-spinning gold. And whether it is a case of the German League negotiating new and improved TV contracts or Bundesliga clubs augmenting their merchandising and sponsorship streams, it is all aboard the gravy train.

"This world title clearly will bring so much more to the Bundesliga," says Christian Heidel, general manager of Mainz, who are one of the more modest financial operations in the German top flight.

"The status of our game has received a real boost throughout the world and even the smallest of our clubs will profit."

Not that a substantial rise in attendances is likely. The Bundesliga already boasts the best gates in Europe (some 13 million spectators last season for an average crowd of 42,609 – up 1.7 per cent from the previous campaign) and at the moment there is very little spare capacity. Most games last term were sell-outs, and while promoted Cologne are a fan magnet, the increase in numbers they bring will effectively be wiped out by the relegation in May of Nuremberg, who despite their mediocrity on the pitch, attracted 40,200 through the turnstiles once a fortnight.

Compared to the two previous German World Cup titles of the Bundesliga era, in 1974 and 1990, today's top flight is in a much better position to inspire, consolidate and grow. Back in 1974 when Franz Beckenbauer, Gerd Muller and Sepp Maier ruled the roost, football was far from the globalised big business it is now. In 1990, many of the key national-team protagonists – such as Lothar Matthaus, Andy Brehme, Rudi Voller, Thomas Berthold and Jurgen Klinsmann – earned their money abroad.

This year, nine of the team that started the Final against Argentina were Bundesliga employees and therefore every week of the new season will be a mini-World Cup fest; a time for excitement, adoration and passion for winning performance.

Goal guarantee...new recruit Lewandowski will give defending champions Bayern Munich an even greater cutting edge

> "Bayern will never dismiss Pep Guardiola. I can give you that in writing"
>
> Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge gives his whole-hearted backing to the club's coach

KEY DATES

SEASON STARTS AUGUST 22, 2014

SEASON ENDS MAY 23, 2015

It will not be enough, however, for the championship to solely take the form of a Brazil 2014 love-in. What the Bundesliga desperately needs is a multi-handed battle for top spot – unlike last season, when Bayern Munich dominated from start to finish and, in effect, had the title in the bag well before Christmas.

One can only hope for a touch more equality and unpredictability in the months ahead. But while Bayern remain hot favourites for the title, the men from the Allianz-Arena can take nothing for granted.

Domestic seasons in the aftermath of a World Cup are notoriously difficult for big clubs to cope with and there has to be a concern that Bayern's many internationals will at some point pay a physical price for the lack of off-season regeneration.

Ideally, Bayern's management would have preferred to start the new season a week or two later than the scheduled August 22. But the suggestion was overruled by other clubs, prompting Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge to claim: "The reason for that is that they saw it as their only chance to cause Bayern problems.

"I would have liked to have seen more solidarity among the clubs who sent a lot of players to the World Cup. Dortmund also sent eight or nine players. At least we didn't suffer any injuries in Brazil."

Anti-Munich conspiracy theories aside, a non-Bavarian title challenge is not entirely out of the question. Schalke, third last term, boast an excellent crop of young players who are growing in maturity and assurance all the time – as illustrated by the frequency with which they came from behind to win in 2013-14. Wolfsburg, with their impressive mix of experienced old heads and youthful vigour, are also a force in the ascendency, and

under new coach Roger Schmidt, Bayer Leverkusen have the attacking-third weapons to blow any opponent away.

Schmidt wants his new team to press high and attack with gunshot velocity, and such tactics will very much continue to be the modus operandi of last season's runners-up Dortmund. If the Yellow-and-Blacks can avoid the over-subscribed treatment room of the past 12 months, they will be back in the breakneck blitz business. When it comes to pushing the motivational buttons coach Jurgen Klopp is a genius.

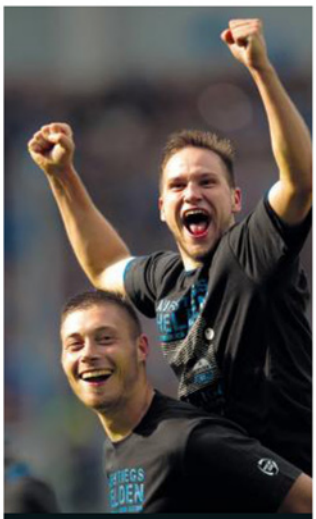
Ultimately, though, the title will be Bayern's to lose, and knowing the perfectionist ways of coach Pep Guardiola and the character of Muller, Neuer and Schweinsteiger it is hard to imagine the wheels coming off. Blessed with the deepest of first-team squads, Guardiola will be able to conquer any post-World Cup fatigue with a reshuffle here and some rotation there. Now that Polish striker Robert Lewandowski has signed on the goals should flow in torrents.

Lewandowski's move from Dortmund to Bayern was not the only switch to set the pulses racing on the Bundesliga circuit. The Dortmunder believe they have repaired the damage up front by paying €26million for Hertha Berlin's Colombian marksman Adrian Ramos and Torino finisher Ciro Immobile. Elsewhere, Leverkusen splashed out €14.5m on highly-rated Hamburg attacking midfielder Hakan Calhanoglu; Hertha pulled off a coup with the acquisition of dynamic Swiss midfielder Valentin Stocker; Wolfsburg fought off a lot of competition to recruit Eintracht Frankfurt right-back Sebastian Jung; and Dortmund increased their defensive options by signing Freiburg's talented centre-back Matthias Ginter.

Full marks, too, to Borussia Monchengladbach for their wheeler-dealing, with the €12m received from Barcelona for goalkeeper Marc-Andre Ter Stegen funding the enrolment of excellent Swiss stopper Yann Sommer, dashing Augsburg winger Andre Hahn, USA World Cup right-back Fabian Johnson – who was a European champion with the German under-21 side in 2011 – and the inventive Belgian midfielder Thorgan Hazard, who has been sent on loan by Chelsea.

The new campaign will feature four recently-arrived coaches. Despite never having taken charge in the Bundesliga, Schmidt's free-wheeling philosophy looks a good fit at Leverkusen, while the Dane, Kasper Hjulmand, was a surprise selection to succeed the inimitable Thomas Tuchel at Mainz. Former Bundesliga-winning coaches Thomas Schaaf and Armin Veh – at Bremen and Stuttgart respectively – will be getting to grips with major rebuilding jobs at Eintracht Frankfurt and Stuttgart, which are not tasks for the faint-hearted and should they stumble early the knives will be out.

The season after Germany's last world title, in 1990, newly promoted Kaiserslautern stunned the country by jumping straight out of the traps and winning the Bundesliga shield. But do not expect the this year's new boys to achieve anything similar. For all their prestige and tremendous support, Cologne are more solid than scintillating, and as for top division virgins Paderborn, survival is the only game in town.


Aiming to make waves...Paderborn

"We'll be the most extreme outsider in the history of the Bundesliga," says Paderborn coach Andre Breitenreiter, a striker with Hamburg in his playing days. "We can draw strength and motivation from this. We surprised everyone by gaining promotion last season and will aim to cause another sensation by surviving in the top flight."

Residents of the smallest ground in the Bundesliga – their Benteler Arena home only having room for 15,000 – Paderborn certainly could not have timed their major league breakthrough better. Good luck to them. They deserve a place in the sun and a chunk of the world championship dividend.

Nick Bidwell

Heads first...Monchengladbach expect great things of new signing Hahn (right)

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA 2014-15

1 Augsburg
2 Bayer Leverkusen
3 Bayern Munich
4 Borussia Dortmund
5 Borussia Monchengladbach
6 Cologne
7 Eintracht Frankfurt
8 Freiburg
9 Hamburg
10 Hanover
11 Hertha Berlin
12 Hoffenheim (Sinsheim)
13 Mainz
14 Paderborn
15 Schalke (Gelsenkirchen)
16 Stuttgart
17 Werder Bremen
18 Wolfsburg

Team-by-team guide to the season

AUGSBURG

Coach: Markus Wienzierl
Key Arrivals: Caiuby (Ingolstadt), Nikola Djurdic (Greuther Furth), Markus Feulner (Nuremberg), *Dominik Kohr (Bayer Leverkusen)*, Tim Matavz (PSV, Hol), Shawn Parker (Mainz).
Key Departures: Mohamed Amsif (Union Berlin), Andre Hahn (Borussia Monchengladbach), Ji Dong-won (Borussia Dortmund), Bajram Nebihi (Union Berlin), Kevin Vogt (Cologne).
After sensationally finishing eighth last season and narrowly missing out on the Europa League, the overachieving Bavarians will once again be looking to take opponents by surprise with their unbreakable team spirit and superior organisation. The sale of winger Hahn, however, is a major blow.

BAYER LEVERKUSEN

Coach: Roger Schmidt
Key Arrivals: Hakan Calhanoglu (Hamburg), Josip Drmic (Nuremberg), *Tin Jedvaj (Roma, Ita)*, Dario Kresic (Mainz), Wendell (Londrina, Bra), Vladlen Yurchenko (Shakhtar Donetsk, Ukr).
Key Departures: *Malcolm Cacutalua (Greuther Furth)*, Emre Can (Liverpool, Eng), Danny Da Costa (Ingolstadt), Jens Hegeler (Hertha Berlin), *Dominik Kohr (Augsburg)*, Jonas Meffert (Karlsruher), *Arkadiusz Milik (Ajax, Hol)*, Andres Palop (retired), *Joel Pohjanpalo (Fortuna Dusseldorf)*, Sidney Sam (Schalke), *Kostas Stafylidis (Fulham, Eng)*.
Brought in this summer from Salzburg, new boss Schmidt is promising an all-guns-blazing attacking style. And in Stefan Kiessling and Son Heung-min, together with newcomers Drmic and Calhanoglu, he has the raw material to make it happen. A key area to improve? Their ability to win after conceding, managing it only three times in 2013-14.

BAYERN MUNICH

Coach: Pep Guardiola
Key Arrivals: Juan Bernat (Valencia, Spa), Robert Lewandowski (Borussia Dortmund), Sebastian Rode (Eintracht Frankfurt)
Key Departures: Toni Kroos (Real Madrid, Spa), Mario Mandzukic (Atletico Madrid, Spa), Daniel Van Buyten (released).
Despite the ease with which they clinched the title last season, the champions might be slightly less comfortable this time around. With no fewer than 11 players on Brazil 2014 duty, fatigue and focus may be issues – and history is against them too, with Bayern failing to win the Bundesliga the season after the nation's World Cup triumphs of 1974 and 1990. Lewandowski should offer more than predecessor Mandzukic, while the incorporation of Spanish left-back Bernat may free up David Alaba for a more attacking role.

Spanish flavour...Bernat will give Bayern Munich's defence a different dimension

BORUSSIA DORTMUND

Coach: Jurgen Klopp
Key Arrivals: Ciro Immobile (Torino, Ita), Matthias Ginter (Freiburg), Ji Dong-won (Augsburg), Adrian Ramos (Hertha Berlin), Nuri Sahin (Real Madrid, Spa).
Key Departures: Robert Lewandowski (Bayern Munich), Julian Schieber (Hertha Berlin).
The sight of Lewandowski leaving on a Bosman for arch-rivals Bayern would have broken many a Yellow-and-Black heart. But life goes on and the Ruhr outfit have recruited judiciously to fill the gap, not only purchasing Serie A top scorer Immobile and Colombian marksman Ramos, but also the promising South Korean all-rounder Ji. Central defender or midfield holder Ginter is another gold standard addition.

BORUSSIA MONCHENGLADBACH

Coach: Lucien Favre
Key Arrivals: Andre Hahn (Augsburg), *Thorgan Hazard (Chelsea, Eng)*, Fabian Johnson (Hoffenheim), Yann Sommer (Basle, Swi), Ibrahima Traore (Stuttgart).
Key Departures: Juan Arango (Tijuana, Mex), Luuk De Jong (PSV, Hol), Lukas Rupp (Paderborn), Marc-Andre Ter Stegen (Barcelona, Spa).
One of the most dangerous teams on the counter-attack in the Bundesliga, they boast even more speed in wide areas now that full-back Johnson and wingers Hahn and Traore have joined. Much will depend on how well Hazard steps into the shoes of veteran Venezuelan left-footer Arango.

COLOGNE

Coach: Peter Stoger
Key Arrivals: *Tomas Kalas (Chelsea, Eng)*, Mergim Mavraj (Greuther Furth), Pawel Olkowski (Gornik Zabrze, Pol), Yuya Osako (Munich 1860), Dusan Svento (Salzburg, Aut), Kevin Vogt (Augsburg), Simon Zoller (Kaiserslautern).
Key Departures: Adil Chihi (Fulham, Eng), Kevin McKenna (retired), *Maurice Exslager (Darmstadt)*, Fabian Schnellhardt (Duisburg), Koray Kacinoglu (released).
Back in the top fight after a two-year absence, they won the second tier at a canter and impressive Austrian coach Stoger should be able to keep the relegation wolf from the door.

EINTRACHT FRANKFURT

Coach: Thomas Schaaf
Key Arrivals: Timothy Chandler (Nuremberg), Makoto Hasebe (Nuremberg), Aleksandar Ignjovski (Werder Bremen), David Kinsombi (Mainz), *Lucas Piazon (Chelsea, Eng)*.
Key Departures: Marvin Bakalorz (Paderborn), Stefano Celozzi (Bochum), Sebastian Jung (Wolfsburg), Marc-Oliver Kempf (Freiburg), Aykut Ozer (Karabukspor, Tur), Sebastian Rode (Bayern Munich), Stephan Schrock (Greuther Furth), Pirmin Schwegler (Hoffenheim), Erik Wille (Duisburg).
It's all change, with long-serving ex-Werder Bremen boss Schaaf taking over in the technical area from Armin Veh and almost half their first XI moving on. Better home form is an absolute must.

FREIBURG

Coach: Christian Streich
Key Arrivals: Roman Burki (Grasshoppers, Swi), Mike Frantz (Nuremberg), Marc-Oliver Kempf (Eintracht Frankfurt), Admir Mehmedi (Dynamo Kiev, Ukr), Sebastian Mielitz (Werder Bremen), Stefan Mitrovic (Benfica, Por), Sascha Riether (Fulham, Eng).
Key Departures: Oliver Baumann (Hoffenheim), Matthias Ginter (Bor Dortmund), Mike Hanke (Guizhou Renhe, Chn), *Vegar Eggen Hedenstad (E Braunschweig)*, *Alexander Schwolow (Arminia Bielefeld)*, Marco Terrazzino (Bochum), *Hendrick Zuck (E Braunschweig)*.
What Freiburg lack in financial muscle, they make up for in youth development, a flair for transfer bargains and the genius of coach Streich for producing sides worth much more than the sum of their parts. Received a timely boost when Swiss forward Mehmedi made his loan move permanent.

■ PLAYERS IN *ITALICS* ARE ON LOAN ■ FOR ALL THE UP-TO-DATE TRANSFER NEWS GO TO WWW.WORLDSOCCER.COM/FEATURES/GERMANY-BUNDESLIGA

Boys from Brazil...Hoffenheim's Firmino is sent tumbling by Naldo of Wolfsburg

HAMBURG

Coach: Mirko Slomka
Key Arrivals: Gideon Jung (Rot-Weiss Oberhausen), Zoltan Stieber (Greuther Furth).
Key Departures: Hakan Calhanoglu (Bayer Leverkusen), Lam Zhi-gin (Greuther Furth), Michael Mancienne (Nottingham Forest, Eng), *Lasse Sobiech (St Pauli)*, Florian Stritzel (Karlsruher).
The one-time powerhouse are a shadow of their former selves, so crippled by boardroom in-fighting and off-the-pace players that they almost went down last season, only surviving by beating Greuther Furth in a play-off. Confidence is in short supply – as is quality at the back and in central midfield.

HANOVER

Coach: Tayfun Korkut
Key Arrivals: Miiko Albornoz (Malmo, Swe), Ceyhun Gulselam (Galatasaray, Tur), Joselu (Hoffenheim), Kenan Karaman (Hoffenheim), Hiroshi Kiyotake (Nuremberg), Vladimir Rankovic (Bayern Munich), Stefan Thesker (Hoffenheim).
Key Departures: Robert Almer (Energie Cottbus), Christopher Avevor (Fortuna Dusseldorf), Mame Biram Diouf (Stoke City, Eng), Adrian Nikci (Young Boys, Swi), Sebastien Pocognoli (WBA, Eng).
Mid-table last term, with good individuals in keeper Ron-Robert Zieler, defender Christian Schulz, midfielder Lars Stindl and striker Joselu, but they do tend to go missing away from home.

HERTHA BERLIN

Coach: Jos Luhukay
Key Arrivals: Roy Beerens (AZ, Hol), Tolga Cigerci (Wolfsburg), Genki Haraguchi (Urawa Red Diamonds, Jap), Jens Hegeler (Bayer Leverkusen), John Heitinga (Fulham, Eng), Marvin Plattenhardt (Nuremberg), Julian Schieber (Borussia Dortmund), Valentin Stocker (Basle, Swi).
Key Departures: Maik Franz (released), Levan Kobiashvili (retired), Adrian Ramos (Borussia Dortmund).
The ambitious capital city club lost 40 per cent of the goal output this summer when Colombian marksman Ramos left. However, they quickly set about plugging the gap with the signing of Schieber, Haraguchi and Beerens.

HOFFENHEIM

Coach: Markus Gisdol
Key Arrivals: Oliver Baumann (Freiburg), Ermin Bicakcic (Eintracht Braunschweig), Janik Haberer (Unterhaching), Kim Jin-su (Albirex Niigata, Jap), Pirmin Schwegler (E Frankfurt), Adam Szalai (Schalke).
Key Departures: *Michael Gregoritsch (Bochum)*, Fabian Johnson (Bor Monchengladbach), Joselu (Hanover), Kenan Karaman (Hanover), Robin Szarka (Energie Cottbus), Stefan Thesker (Hanover), *Sandro Wieser (Aarau, Swi)*.
Made a lot of friends last season with their attacking football and faith in young talent. With a little more defensive steel, they could challenge for a European spot.

MAINZ

Coach: Kasper Hjulmand
Key Arrivals: Daniel Brosinski (Greuther Furth), *Filip Djuricic (Benfica, Por)*, Gonzalo Jara (Nottingham Forest, Eng), Stefanos Kapino (Panathinaikos, Gre).
Key Departures: Maxim Choupo-Moting (Schalke), Dario Kresic (Bayer Leverkusen), Shawn Parker (Augsburg), Christian Wetklo (Darmstadt).
Under previous coach Thomas Tuchel – who stood down at the end of last season – they made a habit of punching above their weight. It remains to be seen whether Hjulmand can work the same magic.

PADERBORN

Coach: Andre Breitenreiter
Key Arrivals: *Marvin Ducksch (Borussia Dortmund)*, Stefan Kutschke (Wolfsburg), Viktor Maier (Lippstadt), Idir Ouali (Dynamo Dresden), Lukas Rupp (Borussia Monchengladbach), Moritz Stoppelkamp (Munich 1860).
Key Departures: *Saliou Sane (Holstein Kiel)*, Fabian Scheffer (released), *Sebastian Schonlau (Verl)*, *Rick Ten Voorde (Dordrecht)*, Manuel Zeitz (Energie Cottbus).
New to the Bundesliga, they were languishing in the fourth tier little more than a decade ago. Yet for all their togetherness, sound organisation and excellence on the break, they are bound to find it tough among the elite.

SCHALKE

Coach: Jens Keller
Key Arrivals: Maxim Choupo-Moting (Mainz), Fabian Giefer (Fortuna Dusseldorf), Sidney Sam (Bayer Leverkusen).
Key Departures: Tim Hoogland (Fulham, Eng), Philipp Max (Karlsruher), Adam Szalai (Hoffenheim).
Firing on all cylinders in the second half of last season, they fully deserved third place – and with the wealth of youthful brilliance in the team (particularly Julian Draxler, Leon Goretzka and Max Meyer) the future looks rosy.

STUTTGART

Coach: Armin Veh
Key Arrivals: Daniel Ginczek (Nuremberg), Adam Hlousek (Nuremberg), Florian Klein (Salzburg, Aut).
Key Departures: Arthur Boka (Malaga, Spa), Patrick Funk (Wehen Wiesbaden), Rani Khedira (RB Leipzig), Ibrahima Traore (Borussia Monchengladbach).
In the wake of a disastrous season in which they went through three coaches and narrowly escaped relegation, the phrase "never again" was on everyone's lips as general manager Fredi Bobic re-appointed Veh, the coach who led the team to the Bundesliga title in 2007. An inspired move? Or just desperation?

WERDER BREMEN

Coach: Robin Dutt
Key Arrivals: Fin Bartels (St Pauli), Alex Galvez (Rayo Vallecano, Spa), Izet Hajrovic (Galatasaray, Tur), Raif Husic (Bayern Munich).
Key Departures: Aaron Hunt (Wolfsburg), Aleksandar Ignjovski (Eintracht Frankfurt), Sebastian Mielitz (Freiburg), Lukas Schmitz (Fortuna Dusseldorf).
The days when they regularly battled for the Bundesliga spoils and competed with distinction in Europe seem long gone. Ex-Freiburg boss and DFB director of sport Dutt talks a good game, but the reality is far less thrilling.

WOLFSBURG

Coach: Dieter Hecking
Key Arrivals: Aaron Hunt (Werder Bremen), Sebastian Jung (Eintracht Frankfurt), Mateusz Klich (PEC Zwolle, Hol).
Key Departures: Jan Polak (Nuremberg), Stefan Kutschke (Paderborn), Willi Evseev (Nuremberg), *Vaclav Pilar (Viktoria Plzen, CzR)*.
About to take part in the Europa League courtesy of a fine fifth-place finish last season, the VW-backed club look especially well-endowed in attacking midfield, where Belgian international Kevin De Bruyne and fast-improving German young gun Maximilian Arnold pull the strings.

Optimistic Michel expects more glory

One more for the cabinet...Olympiakos coach Michel salutes winning last season's championship and wants no complacency this term

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTS AUGUST 23, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY 3, 2015

With two domestic titles and a Greek Cup to show for his first 18 months in charge, Spanish coach Michel expects more of the same from Olympiakos this season.

"Last year we tried to get players who were key to our line-up," says the 51 year-old, who was previously in charge of Sevilla in his homeland. "This year we're looking for good players to supplement what we have.

"I believe we will write history again. I'm optimistic."

Heading the list of those incoming additions is former France and Monaco defender Eric Abidal, a European champion with Barcelona three years ago.

"I was ambitious to play in the Champions League," says the 34-year-old Abidal, who underwent a liver transplant in 2012. "The Greek championship is certainly something different. Olympiakos are a big club who want to win things. My job is to bring my experience to this team and help them as best I can to win more trophies."

Olympiakos won a record 41st Greek title last term and also reached the last 16 of the Champions League, so owner Evangelos Marinakis has dug deep to help boost Michel's squad.

Left-back Arthur Masuaku has arrived from Valenciennes in France, along with Norwegian midfielder Omar Elabdellaoui from Germany's Eintracht Braunschweig, while Swiss Pajtim Kasami, from Fulham, will be expected to provide the spark in midfield following the departure of Paulo Machado to Dinamo Zagreb.

Midfield options are also increased with the arrival of Mathieu Dossevi, also from Valenciennes, and the return of Sambou Yatabare from a loan spell in France with Bastia. But it is up front where the champions may struggle. Costa Rica's Joel Campbell, who had such a fine World Cup, has gone back to Arsenal and more assistance may be needed for Javier Saviola and Michael Olaitan.

It is hard to see beyond yet another season of Olympiakos dominance, particularly when their closest challengers are struggling to strengthen their squads.

PAOK, who finished 17 points adrift in second place, have a new coach in Angelos Anastasiadis but have lost on-loan Slovakia winger Miroslav Stoch. His international team-mate Robert Mak has arrived from Nuremberg as a replacement, but Greek-Russian owner Ivan Savvidis does not plan on spending much in the transfer market due to the financial difficulties faced by the Thessaloniki club.

"I've learned to work with what I have," says Anastasiadis – although he still managed to bring in Romanian full-back Razvan Rat from Rayo Vallecano.

> "I know the supporters here are crazy, but I like that; it's a good sort of crazy"
>
> Eric Abidal on his new club, Olympiakos

It is a similar situation at Atromitos, who will have virtually the same line-up as that which finished third last time out. "We are so close to getting players and then something goes wrong. We are still searching for two or three," says coach Giorgos Paraschos, who has added goalkeeper Andrey Harbunow from BATE of Belarus.

Last season's Greek Cup winners Panathinaikos have serious debts and been unable to make any big new signings.

"We have faith in our team and have shown what we can achieve," says coach Giannis Anastasiou, who lost national team keeper Stefanos Kapino to Mainz and has replaced him with Barnsley's Luke Steele.

Asteras, from the southern town of Tripoli, have done a lot of shopping, while former Italy midfielder Gennaro Gattuso joined OFI as coach in June, but will have to do without goalkeeper Daniel Fernandes, whose loan spell from Twente has finished, midfielders Ze Eduardo, who is now back at Parma, and former Brazil international Dudu Cearense, who has joined Maccabi Netanya of Israel.

As for the two promoted sides, Kerkyra have basically kept their squad from last season, while second tier champions Niki Volos will rely on a raft of loaned players.

Niki Volos are back in the top flight for the first time in 49 years and another team hoping to return home will be Kalloni. They have fingers crossed that their stadium will be ready in time, having had to play last term at the Olympic Stadium in Athens – a 45-minute flight from their Aegean island base.

Lou Economopoulos

GREEK SUPERLEAGUE 2014-15

1 Asteras Tripoli
2 Atromitos (Athens)
Panathinaikos
Panionios
3 Ergotelis (Heraklion)
OFI
4 Kalloni (Mytilene)
5 Kerkyra (Corfu)
6 Levadiakos (Livadeia)
7 Niki Volos
8 Olympiakos (Piraeus)
9 Panetolikos (Agrinio)
10 Panthrakikos (Komotini)
11 PAOK (Thessaloniki)
12 PAS Giannina (Ioannina)
13 Platanias
14 Skoda Xanthi
15 Veria

Paying the price of World Cup success

The downside to Holland's third-place at this summer's World Cup was that the 10 squad members based in the Eredivisie attracted plenty of interest from abroad. Several have already signed contracts with clubs in Europe's biggest leagues, with others are expected to follow their example – all of which makes the standards of the domestic game poorer and harder to predict.

But at least one much-wanted man did decide to stay.

Having spurned the advances of Tottenham Hotspur, Frank De Boer will be chasing his fifth domestic title as Ajax are again the favourites for the Eredivisie title. However, they have lost skipper Siem De Jong to Newcastle United and veteran Christian Poulsen, who decided to return to Denmark.

Niklas Moisander, Daley Blind and out-of-favour striker Kolbeinn Sightorsson may also yet go, while reserve goalkeeper Kenneth Vermeer will leave if he is an understudy to Jasper Cillessen for another year. In return, the Amsterdam club's most notable signings were utility player Nick Viergever from AZ and strikers Richairo Zivkovic of Groningen, Robert Muric from Dinamo Zagreb and Arek Milik on loan from Bayern Leverkusen.

Providing they get an injection of quality, PSV – who will hope to make up for last term's miserable fourth place – will be Ajax's biggest challenger. Luuk De Jong, the younger brother of Ajax's Siem, is looking for a new start after poor spells at Newcastle United and Borussia Monchengladbach and he replaces Augsburg-bound Tim Matavz. While Park Ji-sung (retired), Karim Rekik (returned to Manchester City) and Bryan Ruiz (back at Fulham) have also left Eindhoven, winger Memphis Depay and striker Zakaria Bakkali may soon follow their example.

Wanted...PSV striker Bakkali

Pre-season success...Ajax celebrate beating Benfica 1-0 in the Eusebio Cup, which was played at the Estadio da Luz in July

Meanwhile, Feyenoord are paying the heaviest price for Holland's success. Departing coach Ronald Koeman took top scorer Graziano Pelle with him to Southampton, while international defenders Daryl Janmaat (Newcastle United), Stefan De Vrij (Lazio) and Bruno Martins Indi (Porto) have all left, and Jordy Clasie could be the next one.

Twente will be dark horses for the title, despite Dusan Tadic leaving for Southampton and skipper Rasmus Bengtsson being put on the transfer list after a disagreement with the staff. AZ, with Marco Van Basten at the helm, could be another team finishing in a high position. Heerenveen's new coach Dwight Lodeweges will have to deal with the departure of the league's top scorer Alfred Finnbogason to Real Sociedad.

Many eyes will be on Den Haag, who are Europe's first Chinese-owned club. Sports marketing company United Vansen, who are known for organising the Italian and French Super Cups in Beijing, want to invest a reported £25million, but it is uncertain if a deal will be struck before the transfer deadline.

> "Everyone is obviously for sale"
>
> Ajax coach Frank De Boer on the problem of keeping his star players

KEY DATES

SEASON STARTED AUGUST 08, 2014

SEASON ENDS MAY 23, 2015

Despite small budgets, newcomers Willem II, Dordrecht and Excelsior will all fancy their chances of escaping the drop. Dordrecht and Excelsior may even have an advantage as they play their home games on artificial turf. It's a growing trend in Holland; no fewer than six Eredivisie clubs have now turned their back on real grass.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

DUTCH EREDIVISIE 2014-15

1 Ajax (Amsterdam)
2 AZ (Alkmaar)
3 Cambuur (Leeuwarden)
4 Den Haag (The Hague)
5 Dordrecht
6 Excelsior (Rotterdam)
Feyenoord
7 Go Ahead Eagles (Deventer)
8 Groningen
9 Heerenveen
10 Heracles (Almelo)
11 NAC Breda
12 PEC Zwolle
13 PSV (Eindhoven)
14 Twente (Enschede)
15 Utrecht
16 Vitesse (Arnhem)
17 Willem II (Tilburg)

Still struggling with its demons

Bitter sweet...Conte, flanked by Angelo Ogbonna (left) and captain Buffon, celebrates a third successive Serie A title – but within weeks the Juventus coach had announced his resignation

This was always going to be a season that would start under a negative star. By an unfortunate twist of fate, on the night that Uruguay dispatched Italy from the World Cup, Napoli fan Ciro Esposito died. Esposito had been shot by a Roma fan during skirmishes before the Italian Cup Final in May.

Commentators inevitably linked the two events, with *Gazzetta dello Sport* declaring: "Sometimes fate sends clear signals. Yesterday, our football came to a very sorry end of the road. But the defeat does not concern merely those who took to the field and those who led them.

"This [the death of Esposito] was a defeat for the entire football system which needs to be cleaned and revolutionised from the roots up, from the terraces to children's teams, and from the professional clubs through to the federation."

What is true is that Italian football emerged from Brazil totally rudderless, without a federation (FIGC) president or a national coach following the resignations of Giancarlo Abete and Cesare Prandelli respectively.

As for the team itself, commentators had little sympathy, notwithstanding the biting antics of Uruguyan "Dracula" Luis Suarez, with most pundits arguing that Italy had only themselves to blame for their elimination. *Gazzetta* summed up the national mood, stating: "And so Uruguay and Costa Rica, two countries which between them have fewer inhabitants than the region of Lombardy, have shown us to the door. In truth there are no alibis nor excuses for a side that in two games fails to get a real shot on goal. Nor did the side ever look as if it could and would win."

Many commentators focused on the same perceived Italian shortcomings: the false sense of security generated by the 2-1 opening win over England; the tactical confusion generated by too many changes from Prandelli; the side's physical preparation, given that Italy finished each game out on their feet; and, inevitably, the failure of striker Mario Balotelli to deliver either against Costa Rica or Uruguay, in which he was substituted at half-time.

> "A defeat for the entire football system which needs to been cleaned from the roots"
>
> *Gazetto dello Sport* reacts to the killing of a Napoli fan by a Roma supporter

Then, too, there was much speculation about the apparent dressing-room tensions implicit in the post-match comments of captain Gigi Buffon. Without naming names, the goalkeeper was critical of the younger players who had failed to deliver, leaving it to such as himself, Andrea Barzagli, Andrea Pirlo and Daniele De Rossi to "pull the cart".

Many commentators suspected Balotelli might have been the prime object of that attack.

With the media involved in lengthy speculation as to who would succeed both Abete and Prandelli, Italian football was further rocked by yet another resignation, that of Antonio Conte, coach of champions Juventus. Even if both parties were keen to stress that this was a consensual, non-contested divorce, the timing of the announcement, on the second day of pre-season training, suggested otherwise.

In truth, there had been indications that not everything was hunky dory between coach and club right from the day in May when Juventus lifted the Serie A title. In particular, many latched onto one intriguing comment made by Conte

KEY DATES

SEASON STARTS AUGUST 30, 2014

SEASON ENDS MAY 30, 2015

when asked about next season: "Well, you cannot go to eat at a €100 restaurant with just €10 in your pocket, can you?"

Everyone presumed this was a Champions League reference to the tight purse strings at Juventus, who cannot even begin to match the spending power of the biggest Premier League clubs. For example, the 10-year £750million Adidas sponsorship deal announced by Manchester United means the sportswear giant will be paying them three times as much per year as they pay Juve.

In the meantime, Juventus moved quickly, replacing Conte with former Milan coach Massimiliano Allegri. As for Conte, the position of national coach is, of course, currently unfilled...

Juventus paid the biggest fee of the summer so far by a Serie A club – €20million for forward Alvaro Morata from Real Madrid – but generally spending has been low key.

Milan, under new coach Filippo Inzaghi, paid €4.3m for French defender Adil Rami from Valencia, while midfielder Jeremy Menez arrived on a free transfer from Paris Saint-Germain.

Some of the more intriguing transfers have taken place in the capital, where Lazio signed, among others, Dutch World Cup defender Stefan De Vrij and midfielder Marco Parolo. Roma picked up Ashley Cole on his release from Chelsea, as well as highly rated Argentinian forward Juan Iturbe.

However, the build-up to the season was overshadowed by a row involving federation president-elect Carlo Tavecchio. With the new season around the corner, a candidate was needed to fill the void left by Abete. That man was 71-year-old Tavecchio, who for most of the last 15 years has been head of the Italian amateur federation.

During that time, Tavecchio had generally flown well below the radar of national and international media attention. Which, given what he had to say to the assembled Serie A club directors and FIGC officials when presenting his candidacy in Rome in late July, was probably no bad thing.

Outlining the need for stricter controls on non-EU players bought into Italian football, he said: "England checks out players when they arrive in the country to see if they are professional enough to play. With us, however, 'Opti Poba', who yesterday was eating bananas, today is first choice at Lazio..."

Even if his remarks prompted only silence from the ranks of the club directors, within hours they had instigated a virulent, web-driven polemic that stretched far beyond the boundaries of football. Fans, politicians and commentators all stigmatised him as a racist, calling on him to withdraw his candidacy.

Initially, Tavecchio declined, although he apologised for his remarks, saying his intention had been to outline the dynamics of a problem currently facing Italian football. Yet within 48 hours, not only FIFA but also the European Commission had expressed their concern about his words, with FIFA's task force on racism calling on the FIGC to investigate the whole affair – although how it will carry out an investigation into its own presidential election remains to be seen. It could lead to the appointment of either a special commissioner or the only other candidate in the field, former Milan and Italy midfielder Demetrio Albertini.

What remains, however, will be the sense of an Italian football governing class that simply does not get it. It is not as if the last decade has not seen an unedifyingly long line of racist incidents in Italian football, with the most recent ones last season involving black players Balotelli, Kevin-Prince Boateng and Kevin Constant.

Worse still, in the light of Dani Alves' famous banana-eating gesture last spring, Tavecchio's words seem especially insensitive and ignorant. He hardly sounds like an ideal choice to lead Italian football into a brighter, non-racist, non-violent world.

Paddy Agnew

Warm-up...Cesena take on Juventus

In charge...former Milan coach Allegri is the new man at Juventus

ITALIAN SERIE A 2014-15

1 Atalanta (Bergamo)
2 Cagliari
3 Cesena
4 Chievo (Verona) Verona
5 Empoli
6 Fiorentina
7 Genoa Sampdoria
8 Internazionale Milan
9 Juventus (Turin) Torino
10 Lazio (Rome) Roma
11 Napoli (Naples)
12 Palermo
13 Parma
14 Sassuolo
15 Udinese

Team-by-team guide to the season

Dominant...Vidic (in dark kit) should strengthen Internazionale's back line this season

ATALANTA

Coach: Stefano Colantuono
Key Arrivals: Marco Ambrosio (Roma), Giuseppe Biava (Lazio), Richmond Boakye (Genoa), Nicolo Cherubin (Bologna), Marco D'Alessandro (Roma), Boukary Drame (Chievo).
Key Departures: *Riccardo Cazzola (Cesena)*, *Giuseppe De Luca (Bari)*, *Luigi Giorgi (Cesena)*, Marko Livaja (Rubin Kazan, Rus), Stefano Lucchini (Cesena), *Moussa Kone (Avellino)*, *Constantin Nica (Cesena)*, Mario Yepes (retired).
No pushovers last season, they finished comfortably in mid-table. Key figures such as coach Colantuono, Argentinian striker German Denis and pocket battleship Maxi Morales are still there. Another good season awaits.

CAGLIARI

Coach: Zdenek Zeman
Key Arrivals: Godfred Donsah (Palermo), Caio Rangel (Flamengo, Bra).
Key Departures: *Davide Astori (Roma)*, Vlada Avramov (Torino), Nene (Verona), Marios Oikonomou (Bologna), Gabriele Perico (Cesena).
Attention is likely to focus on two issues: the return of Zeman, who was sacked by Roma in February last year, and the new ownership of the Giulini family, who control chemical company Flurosid. Zeman will have to work his magic if they are to avoid the drop.

CESENA

Coach: Pierpaolo Bisoli
Key Arrivals: Stefano Lucchini (Atalanta), *Hordur Magnusson (Juventus)*.
Key Departures: none.
To celebrate his side's promotion after two seasons in Serie B, Bisoli has been cycling up local mountains and swimming across the canal in the port of Cesenatico. He, however, was the first to say that it will be even tougher for Cesena to stay up.

CHIEVO

Coach: Eugenio Corini
Key Arrivals: *Valter Birsa (Milan)*, Alessandro Gamberini (Napoli), Mariano Izco (Catania), Maxi Lopez (Catania).
Key Departures: Michael Agazzi (Milan), Boukary Drame (Atalanta), Luca Rigoni (Palermo), Cyril Thereau (Udinese).
The "Flying Donkeys" have kept well under the radar in recent times. Corini returned to the club in November, to replace Giuseppe Sannino, and did well to avoid the drop. A repeat performance this season would do just fine.

EMPOLI

Coach: Maurizio Sarri
Key Arrivals: *Rodrigo Aguirre (Udinese)*, Tiberio Guarente (Sevilla, Spa), *Luigi Sepe (Napoli)*.
Key Departures: none.
Back in Serie A after a seven-year gap, Empoli will struggle, but the experience of striker Francesco Tavano could offset the inexperience of Serie A debutant coach Sarri.

FIORENTINA

Coach: Vincenzo Montella
Key Arrivals: Jose Basanta (Monterrey, Mex), Joshua Brillante (Newcastle Jets, Aus), Ciprian Tatarusanu (Steaua Bucharest, Rom).
Key Departures: none.
A top-three finish has to be the primary objective of a side which continues to play good football and has, so far, held on to Juan Cuadrado. Up front, the physical frailty of both Mario Gomez and Giuseppe Rossi is worrying.

GENOA

Coach: Gian Piero Gasperini
Key Arrivals: Iago Falque (Tottenham Hotspur, Eng), *Alessandro Matri (Milan)*, *Davide Masura (Udinese)*, Diego Perotti (Sevilla, Spa), Aleandro Rosi (Parma).
Key Departures: Alberto Gilardino (Guangzhou Evergrande, Chn), Sime Vrsaljko (Sassuolo).
Genoa struggled for much of last season, even though they replaced Fabio Liverani with Gasperini in September. New boys Matri, Perotti and Rosi may help.

New role...Inzaghi in the Milan hot seat

INTERNATIONALE

Coach: Walter Mazzarri
Key Arrivals: *Dodo (Roma)*, *Yann M'Vila (Rubin Kazan, Rus)*, Nemanja Vidic (Manchester United, Eng).
Key Departures: Diego Milito (Racing, Arg), Walter Samuel (Basle, Swi), Javier Zanetti (retired).
The new arrivals might put a spring in the Inter step for Mazzari who, in his second season, will be under pressure to deliver a Champions League spot.

JUVENTUS

Coach: Massimiliano Allegri
Key Arrivals: Kingsley Coman (Paris Saint-Germain, Fra), Patrice Evra (Manchester United, Eng), Alvaro Morata (Real Madrid, Spa), *Roberto Pereyra (Udinese)*, *Romulo (Verona)*.
Key Departures: Federico Peluso (Sassuolo), Fabio Quagliarella (Torino), Mirko Vucinic (Al Jazira, UAE).
Is there life after Antonio Conte? Right now, it is hard to see a fourth consecutive title, let alone a Champions League. Allegri has a hard act to follow.

LAZIO

Coach: Stefano Pioli
Key Arrivals: Dusan Basta (Udinese), Stefan De Vrij (Feyenoord, Hol), Filip Djordjevic (Nantes, Fra), Marco Parolo (Parma).
Key Departures: Giuseppe Biava (Atalanta).
Parolo and Basta are interesting additions to a useful, journeyman squad which still features such talents as Antonio Candreva, Miroslav Klose and Cristian Ledesma. Lazio look sure to take points off some of their bigger rivals.

MILAN

Coach: Filippo Inzaghi
Key Arrivals: Michael Agazzi (Cagliari), Alex (Paris Saint-Germain, Fra), Jeremy Menez (Paris

■ PLAYERS IN *ITALICS* ARE ON LOAN ■ FOR ALL THE UP-TO-DATE TRANSFER NEWS GO TO WWW.WORLDSOCCER.COM/FEATURES/ITALY-SERIE-A

Old foes...Roma newcomer Cole (left) in the thick of things against Manchester United

Saint-Germain, Fra), Adil Rami (Valencia).
Key Departures: Kingsley Boateng (NAC, Hol), Urby Emanuelson (Roma), Bartosz Salamon (Sampdoria), Bakaye Traore (Bursaspor, Tur).
If Stephan El Shaarawy and Mario Balotelli were to refind their best form up front, new coach Inzaghi could see his side at least improve on last season's poor showing.

NAPOLI

Coach: Rafael Benitez
Key Arrivals: Kalidou Koulibaly (Genk, Blg), *Michu (Swansea, Eng)*.
Key Departures: none.
With Benitez still in charge, could this be the year to lift a title not won since the Maradona days? There is plenty of optimism, but the distraction of the Champions League may not help.

PALERMO

Coach: Giuseppe Iachini
Key Arrivals: Luca Rigoni (Chievo).
Key Departures: Kyle Lafferty (Norwich City, Eng), *Gennaro Troianiello (Bologna)*.
The only real question worth asking about Serie B champions Palermo concerns their owner, Maurizio Zamparini. In 25 years, first with Venezia and then Palermo, he has sacked no less than 48 coaches. How long will Iachini last? A return to Serie B cannot be excluded.

PARMA

Coach: Roberto Donadoni
Key Arrivals: Daniel Tozser (Genoa).
Key Departures: Marco Parolo (Lazio).
One of the surprises of last season, Parma played their way into the Europa League, only to be ruled out of the competition for financial irregularities and replaced by Torino. The good news is that Donadoni is still in position.

ROMA

Coach: Rudi Garcia
Key Arrivals: *Davide Astori (Cagliari)*, Ashley Cole (Chelsea, Eng), Urby Emanuelson (Milan), Juan Iturbe (Verona), Seydou Keita (Valencia, Spa), *Leandro Paredes (Boca Juniors, Arg)*, Antonio Sanabria (Sassuolo), *Salih Ucan (Fenerbahce, Tur)*.
Key Departures: Marco D'Alessandro (Atalanta), *Dodo (Internazionale)*, *Tin Jedvaj (Bayer Leverkusen, Ger)*, *Marquinho (Al Ittihad, Sau)*, Rodrigo Taddei (Perugia), Valerio Verre (Udinese).
With good reason, Roma fans point out that last season's haul of 85 points would have won five of the last seven title contests. Cole and Iturbe look like good buys but one suspects that Roma, like the other Italian sides, will struggle to handle the twin comittments of Serie A and Champions League.

SAMPDORIA

Coach: Sinisa Mihajlovic
Key Arrivals: Jose Campana (Crystal Palace, Eng).
Key Departures: Gaetano Berardi (Leeds United, Eng), Birkir Bjarnason (Pescara), *Matias Rodriguez (Gremio, Bra)*.
A mid-table finish and success in the Genovese derby will be the height of Samp's ambitions. They are relatively unchanged, looking to Eder, Stefano Okaka and Manolo Gabbiadini in attack.

SASSUOLO

Coach: Eusebio Di Francesco
Key Arrivals: Federico Peluso (Juventus), Sime Vrsaljko (Genoa).
Key Departures: *Gaetano Masucci (Frosinone)*.
A first-ever Serie A season saw a 7-0 home defeat to Internazionale and a 4-3 home win over Milan. Di Francesco was sacked in January, recalled in March, and kept them up with a game to spare.

TORINO

Coach: Giampiero Ventura
Key Arrivals: Vlada Avramov (Cagliari), Pontus Jonsson (Malmo, Swe), Josef Martinez (Young Boys, Swi), Cristian Molinaro (Stuttgart, Ger), *Antonio Nocerino (Milan)*, Fabio Quagliarella (Juventus), Gaston Silva (Defensor, Uru).
Key Departures: Ciro Immobile (Borussia Dortmund, Ger).
Thanks to Parma's exclusion, Torino gained entry to the Europa League. Having lost striker Immobile, it remains to be seen if those bought in can fill the gap.

UDINESE

Coach: Andrea Stramaccioni
Key Arrivals: Guilherme (Corinthians, Bra), Nabil Jaadi (Anderlecht, Blg), Albert Riera (Galatasaray, Tur), Cyris Thereau (Chievo).
Key Departures: Dusan Basta (Lazio), Maicosuel (Atletico Mineiro, Bra), *Roberto Pereyra (Juventus)*.
Returned to a more realistic position in the table last season after a couple of years in the Champions League zone. Antonio Di Natale, Giampiero Pinzi and ex-Inter coach Stramaccioni should ensure another comfortable mid-table finish.

VERONA

Coach: Andrea Mandorlini
Key Arrivals: Giorgi Chanturia (CFR Cluj, Rom), *Antonio Luna (Aston Villa, Eng)*, Rafael Marquez (Leon, Mex), Nene (Cagliari), *Mounir Obbadi (Monaco, Fra)*, *Panagiotis Tachtsidis (Genoa)*.
Key Departures: Juan Iturbe (Roma), *Romulo (Juventus)*.
A mid-table finish does not reflect the fact that for three months they were consistently in the top five. Luca Toni is still doing the business, while Greek midfielder Tachtsidis and Brazilian striker Nen look like useful additions.

Welcome sight...Fiorentina fans will hope to see the best of striker Rossi once more

Foreign coaches taking over

The number of foreign coaches in the domestic game was the summer's big talking point in Poland, with six of the 16 top-flight teams employing a non-Polish boss as the season got under way.

Lechia Gdansk (Quim Machado, Portugal), Legia Warsaw (Henning Berg, Norway), Ruch Chorzow (Jan Kocian, Slovakia), Zawisza Bydgoszcz (Jorge Paixao, Portugal), Piast Gliwice (Angel Perez Garcia, Spain) and Gornik Leczna (Yuri Shatalov, Ukraine) have all gone down that route, although Shatalov does have dual nationality.

Such is the trend for imported coaches, Jagiellonia Bialystok's Michal Probierz – who is Polish and was born in Bytom in the south of the country – gave his press conference in German after the opening game of the campaign... and then translated it into Polish!

"It is fashionable to have foreign coaches in Poland," explained the 41-year-old. "If a Polish coach says something it is not important for many; they wanted German ones."

The situation is not improved by the case of Robert Warzycha, the former Everton midfielder who was capped 47 times by Poland and finished his career in the USA. On returning home to take charge of Gornik Zabrze in March, the Polish FA would not accept he had the necessary coaching licence. The only official role he can hold at a club with huge financial problems and an uncertain future is as sporting director.

Far all that, many of the imported coaches are doing well.

Garcia, who took over in a very difficult situation before the end of last season, successfully avoided relegation with Piast, while Kocian led Ruch to third place and was voted coach of the season. Shatalov led Gornik to promotion last season and Paixao began this term by helping Polish Cup holders Zawisza to a 3-2 victory over Legia in the Polish Super Cup, thanks to Vahan Gevorgyan's injury-time goal.

As far as Polish FA chairman Zbigniew Boniek is concerned, a more important issue is the influx of foreign players who are generally stopping young Poles from breaking through. Last year he presented an idea to reduce the number of foreigners, but under EU law it is only possible to apply this to players from outside Europe.

Defending champions Legia have plenty of imported players, with a backbone of Slovak keeper Dusan Kuciak, Croat skipper Ivica Vrdoljak and Serb striker Miroslav Radovic, plus 19-year-old Slovak midfielder prospect Ondrej Duda. Their main rivals Lech Poznan have nine foreigners in the squad.

Although many players see the Ekstraklasa as a stepping stone to Europe's bigger leagues, few make a successful transition and many return to Poland.

For example, Slovak striker Robert Demjan, the league's best player in 2013, is back with Podbeskidzie Bielsko-Biala after a disastrous season in Belgium with Waasland-Beveren, while Bosnian midfielder Semir Stilic, who tried his luck in Ukraine and Turkey with Karpaty Lviv and Gaziantepspor after leaving Lech, has joined Wisla.

Although there are talented home-grown prospects – such as 17-year-old striker Dawid Kownacki and 19-year-old midfielder Karol Linetty, both of Lech – they are few and far between these days.

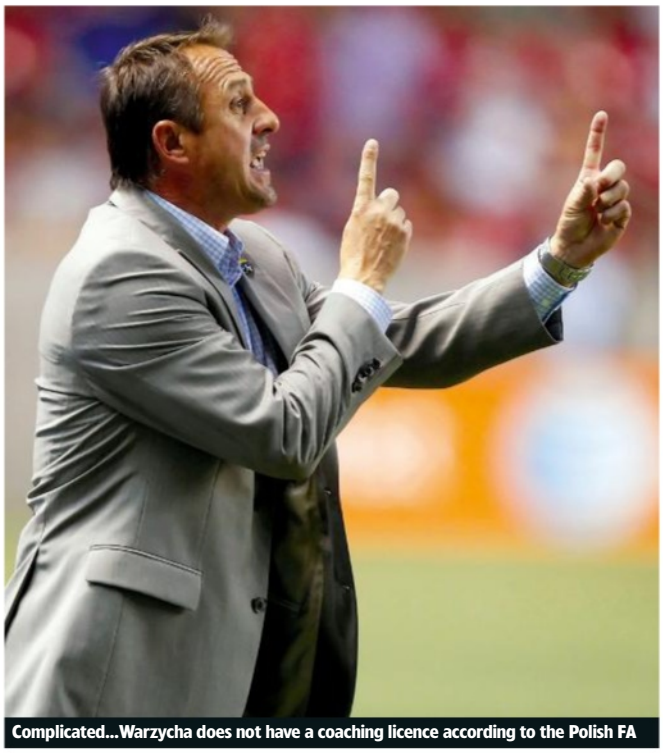
Dariusz Kurowski

Speaking out...coach Probierz

> "I am not against foreigners, but it is highly irritable for me that their opinions, even so banal, are noticed"
>
> Jagiellonia Bialystok coach Michal Probierz

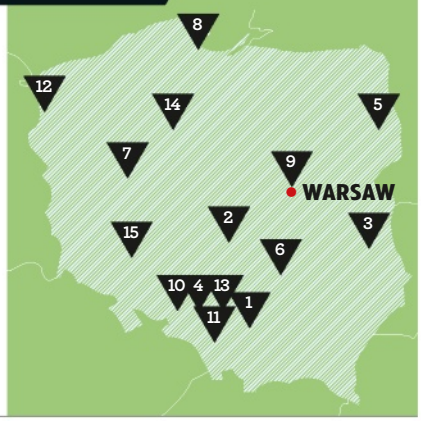
KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED JULY 20, 2014
SEASON ENDS JUNE 7, 2015

Import...Radovic joined Legia in 2006


Complicated...Warzycha does not have a coaching licence according to the Polish FA

POLISH EKSTRAKLASA 2014-15

1 Cracovia
Wisla Krakow
2 GKS Belchatow
3 Gornik Leczna
4 Gornik Zabrze
5 Jagiellonia Bialystok
6 Korona Kielce
7 Lech Poznan
8 Lechia Gdansk
9 Legia Warsaw
10 Piast Gliwice
11 Podbeskidzie Bielsko-Biala
12 Pogon Szczecin
13 Ruch Chorzow
14 Zawisza Bydgoszcz
15 Slask Wroclaw



All change makes for unpredictable campaign

Marquee signing...Porto have landed Barcelona's Spain under-21 striker Tello

With Benfica and Porto undergoing complete squad overhauls, and Sporting Lisbon showing strong signs of stirring from their slumber, this season's title race promises to be as fascinating as it is unpredictable from the outset.

And an three-way intriguing battle between a wizened managerial hand (Benfica's Jorge Jesus), an outsider taking on his first big club job (Julen Lopetegui, Porto) and one of the country's brightest young coaches (Sporting's Marco Silva) is an added ingredient in what promises to be a tantalising tussle.

Defending champions Benfica finished last season on a huge high, having swept to an unprecedented domestic treble to trigger talk of an end to Porto's hegemony and a definitive power shift in Portuguese football. But the decimation of Jesus' team in the summer transfer market has changed the tone of that particular conversation.

"We are paying the price for our success," says the 60-year-old in response to seeing more than half his starters from last term depart the Estadio da Luz. The charismatic Jesus has done an outstanding job in turning players of potential into performers of the highest calibre since arriving in Lisbon six years ago. But he now faces his biggest challenge yet, having lost key players such as Jan Oblak (Atletico Madrid), Ezequiel Garay (Zenit), Rodrigo Moreno (Valencia, on loan) and Lazar Markovic (Liverpool).

While supporters of Portugal's most popular club fret about what lies ahead, Porto and Sporting fans will be confident their sides are well prepared to fight for the title.

Porto may have lost talismanic holding midfielder Fernando to Manchester City but they have brought in some exciting talent, with Lopetegui making full use of his connections in La Liga and his close links with young Spanish internationals, having successfully managed the country's under-19, under-20 and under-21 sides.

Star losses...Benfica boss Jesus

Barcelona's Cristian Tello is the marquee signing, but Atletico Madrid's Adrian Lopez and Oliver Torres, plus Real Madrid's Carlos Casemiro, appear to have furnished Lopetegui with the tools needed to propel Porto back to their perch. The question remains whether an inexperienced club coach, new to Portuguese football, can mould a wealth of talent into a cohesive unit.

Sporting's young side, built for the most part around home-grown talent, exceeded all expectations last season when finishing as runners-up. The squad of rising stars is now under the orders of the similarly upwardly mobile 37-year-old Silva, whose three years of incredible achievement at Estoril landed him the job.

The feeling among the Lions' fans is that they have every chance of ending Porto and Benfica's 12-year stranglehold on the title.

Many eyes will be trained on the impact made by Sporting's most expensive summer signing, 18-year-old Ryan Gauld, who has been dubbed "mini Messi" and is the first Scot to play for the club in its 108-year existence.

The wildly unpredictable nature of the title race, with the differing backdrops affecting the three contenders, extends to the rest of the expanded 18-team league.

Former champions Boavista were reinstated to the top flight directly from the third tier, having successfully argued that the correct legal procedures were not followed in the "Golden Whistle" corruption scandal that led to their demotion.

While it is heartening to see one of Portugal's few well-supported clubs outside the "big three" back among the elite, it may take a minor miracle to avoid relegation.

Tom Kundert

KEY DATES

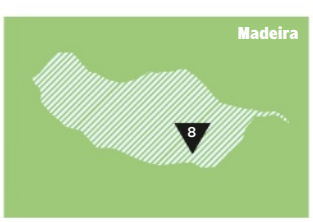
SEASON STARTS
AUGUST 17, 2014

SEASON ENDS
MAY 23, 2015

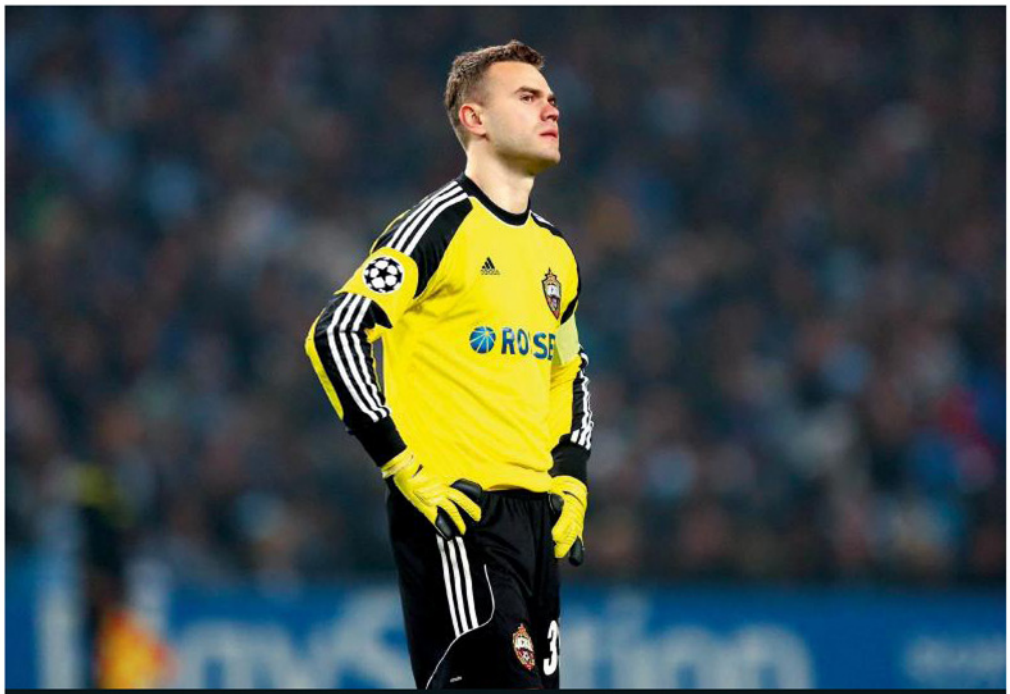
> "They've paid a big price but hopefully I can put in big performances for them and establish myself"
>
> Ryan Gauld, who joined Sporting Lisbon from Dundee United for £3million

PORTUGUESE PRIMEIRA 2014-15

1 Academica (Coimbra)
2 Arouca
3 Belenenses (Lisbon)
Benfica
Sporting Lisbon
4 Boavista (Porto)
Porto
5 Braga
6 Estoril
7 Gil Vicente (Barcelos)
8 Maritimo (Funchal)
Nacional
9 Moreirense
10 Pacos de Ferreira
11 Rio Ave (Vila do Conde)
12 Penafiel
13 Vitoria Guimaraes
14 Vitoria Setubal



Fans have not forgiven World Cup stars


Blame...Akinfeev suffered abuse from supporters on his return to domestic action after a disastrous World Cup with the national team

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED AUGUST 1, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY 29, 2015

The domestic season may be under way, but if the reaction to CSKA Moscow goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev in the 3-1 Super Cup victory over nine-man Rostov is anything to go by, the country's dismal World Cup showing is still at the forefront of most fans' minds.

Akinfeev was roundly booed before the game in Krasnodar after his poor performance in Brazil, where he conceded a bizarre goal against South Korea, let in a late effort against Belgium and failed to intercept a crucial pass that led to an Algeria goal.

Champions last term, CSKA were worthy winners of the Super Cup. Cup-holders Rostov had taken a first-half lead through Hrvoje Milic before Pontus Wernbloom equalised. But after Alexandru Gatcan and Guelor Kanga received their marching orders, Zoran Tosic and Seydou Doumbia wrapped things up.

"It was very important to win this trophy as we've experienced personnel problems," said CSKA coach Leonid Slutsky, who started the new campaign without injured Russia internationals Alan Dzagoev and Georgy Shchennikov, and Latvian midfielder Aleksandrs Cauna, while Sweden midfielder Rasmus Elm was missing with stomach problems.

The biggest threat to CSKA this season will almost certainly come from Zenit, who boast the league's biggest budget and possibly the most impressive pre-season purchase. Andre Villas-Boas, who replaced Luciano Spalletti as coach towards the end of the last term, has bought in Ezequiel Garay from Benfica for reported €7million and Argentina's World Cup defender joins a star-studded squad that also includes Brazil's Hulk and Alex Witsel of Belgium.

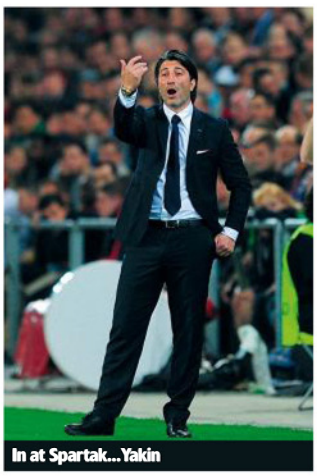
Lokomotiv Moscow only surrendered the title in the closing stages of last season and will hope to provide a strong challenge once again, as will Spartak Moscow who, under new coach Murat Yakin, have brought back the league's top Russian scorer Artyom Dzyuba after a loan spell at Rostov. Spartak will have an extra incentive as they have now made the long-awaited move into their new stadium in the Moscow suburbs.

Back in the top flight after six years, Torpedo Moscow will not be anywhere near strong enough to compete with the elite. They, like fellow promoted clubs Mordovia, Arsenal Tula and Ufa, would probably just settle for avoiding a relegation scrap.

Victor Gusev

> "Our goal is to win the Russian league and to gain a place in Europe's top 10"
>
> Zenit coach Andre Villas-Boas

Zenit star...Brazilian forward Hulk


In at Spartak...Yakin

RUSSIAN PREMIER LEAGUE 2014-15

1 Amkar Perm
2 Arsenal Tula
3 CSKA Moscow
Dynamo Moscow
Lokomotiv Moscow
Spartak Moscow
Torpedo Moscow
4 Krasnodar
Kuban Krasnodar
5 Mordovia (Saransk)
6 Rostov
7 Rubin Kazan
8 Terek (Grozny)
9 Ufa
10 Ural (Yekaterinburg)
11 Zenit (St Petersburg)

Celtic in a title race of one

Fierce rivalry...but the Edinburgh derby between Hibernian (green) and Hearts will be a second-tier affair this season

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED AUGUST 9, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY 2015

A topsy-turvy season is under way in Scotland, with as much attention focused on the second tier, where relegated Edinburgh rivals Hearts and Hibernian face Rangers, as on the top flight, where champions Celtic face no realistic challengers.

Celtic started as overwhelming favourites to retain the Premiership title, despite teething troubles under new manager Ronny Deila, who previously worked wonders at Norwegian club Stromsgodset.

The champions were beaten 4-1 by Legia Warsaw in the first leg of their Champions League qualifier, so a repeat of last season's European adventures was highly unlikely.

Trouble...Celtic (left) lost 4-1 in Warsaw

The signing of goalkeeper Craig Gordon from Sunderland has raised the possibility of Fraser Forster departing south of the border, but so far there have been no offers for the England international, or for defender Virgil Van Dijk.

Deila is one of a clutch of new managers taking charge. Tommy Craig at St Mirren, Alex Neil (Hamilton Academical), Paul Hartley (Dundee) and John Hughes (Inverness Caledonian Thistle) will all be taking part in their first full seasons. Indeed, only Motherwell's Stuart McCall has been in his current job for more than two campaigns.

Motherwell pipped Aberdeen to second place last season and McCall continues to work wonders at Fir Park. However, the loss of defender Shaun Hutchinson to Fulham may prove too much as Motherwell battle to finish as the best of the rest behind Celtic, especially as no replacements have been signed for departing forwards James McFadden and Henri Anier.

Aberdeen ended a two-decade wait for silverware with last season's League Cup victory, and Derek McInnes' side will be fancied to take second spot, especially after signing ex-Scotland striker David Goodwillie, released by Blackburn Rovers.

Dundee United sold young talents Andrew Robertson and Ryan Gauld for a combined £6million which may impede their progress, though new arrival Blair Spittal from Queens Park comes highly rated.

Promoted Dundee were the busiest club with manager Hartley making 12 signings, including Kevin Thomson from Hibernian, as he continues his squad overhaul.

It could be exciting at the bottom as well as the top – as Hibernian's decline via the play-offs last season testified. Kilmarnock have been weakened by the loss of Kris Boyd to Rangers, while Hamilton, who were promoted at Hibs' expense, have the smallest budget by some distance.

Hibernian and Hearts' relegation means the top flight will be without a capital club for the first time. But with the promotion of Rangers from League One, the second tier will feature 12 games between the division's three leading clubs.

Despite ongoing concerns about their financial status, Rangers have been able to re-unite Boyd with strike partner Kenny Miller.

Hearts, with a new management of team of head coach Robbie Neilson and director of football Craig Levein, have so far signed eight new faces, including Soufian El Hassnaoui from Sparta Rotterdam, Alim Ozturk of Trabzonspor and Neil Alexander from Crystal Palace.

Incoming Hibs manager Alan Stubbs must rebuild a side that capitulated under Terry Butcher last season. Midfielder Scott Allan has joined from West Bromwich Albion, along with defender David Gray of Burton Albion. Falkirk, with a bright young squad under new manager Peter Houston, will also challenge for the play-offs again.

With only one team guaranteed automatic promotion, the Championship will arguably be more watchable than the Premiership.

John Holmesdale

SCOTTISH PREMIERSHIP 2014-15

1 Aberdeen
2 Celtic (Glasgow)
Partick Thistle
3 Dundee
Dundee United
4 Hamilton
5 Inverness CT
6 Kilmarnock
7 Motherwell
8 Ross County (Dingwell)
9 St Johnstone (Perth)
10 St Mirren (Paisley)

Real and Barca build again

Star signing...Real Madrid unveil €80million Colombian World Cup hero and Golden Boot winner Rodriguez

Atletico Madrid's reward for becoming the first club outside Spain's big two to win the league in over a decade was to see their best players depart. They had achieved the "impossible" – in the words of their coach – by preventing Real Madrid and Barcelona from winning La Liga, but they could not stop the deconstruction of their team. As for Madrid and Barca, they are determined not to be denied again.

With every victory, so the door to other clubs opened for Atletico's players and huge offers were made that were too good to refuse – both for the players and the club. Atletico are still in debt to the taxman and could not hang on to those who wanted to go. Top scorer Diego Costa, Thibault Courtois and Filipe Luis all departed for Chelsea, while Diego Ribas went to Fenerbahce, Adrian Lopez joined Porto and David Villa headed for the USA.

However, Atletico did manage to complete some very good business of their own, bringing in Antoine Griezmann from Real Sociedad and Mario Mandzukic of Bayern Munich.

In the same period, Barcelona signed Luis Suarez for €81 million and Ivan Rakitic, who was La Liga's outstanding midfielder last season, from Sevilla, as well as two goalkeepers and a central defender/left-back in Jeremy Mathieu from Valencia. Interestingly, Barcelona will meet Real Madrid on October 26 – which is the day Suarez's four-month ban comes to an end.

Real, meanwhile, unveiled Toni Kroos and James Rodriguez, having spent €110m compared to Barca's €124m – that latter figure being more than Atletico's entire annual budget.

So as Madrid and Barcelona signed two of the most talented players in the world, the one team

KEY DATES

SEASON STARTS AUGUST 23, 2014

SEASON ENDS MAY 23, 2015

Welcome to Madrid...Kroos

who got the better of them last season – and the first to break up the top two at all in five years – have surely been overtaken once again. If Atletico brought hope to everyone, it was diminished in the transfer market.

The amount of talent at the disposal of Real and Barcelona is extraordinary, almost absurd. It is unmatched by anyone anywhere, least of all in Spain.

But if that is a familiar story, it is because it happened last year too. And all year coach Diego Simeone insisted there was no way Atletico could win the league...only for Atletico to win the league – and on a budget a fifth of their rivals.

That title, celebrated by an estimated 200,00 fans on the streets of the capital, can never be taken away from them, although Real's late, late comeback in the Champions League Final certainly hurt. The fact that Simeone has remained gives supporters hope as his was the one departure that would have been truly disastrous.

After the Final, when asked "what now?", Simeone said he would study the squad, study the market and come back a month or so later ready to defend the title. The transformation under the Argentinian has been astonishing: a Europa League, Spanish Cup, La Liga title and Champions League Final being testament to his impact. Obstacles are forever placed in the way of his team but they have overcome them all. Can it continue?

The departure of Radamel Falcao 12 months ago seemed to be a disaster but Costa led them from the front. This club has had some hugely impressive strikers over the years – Cristian Vieri, Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink, Fernando Torres, Diego Forlan, Sergio Aguero, Falcao, Costa – and now Mandzukic.

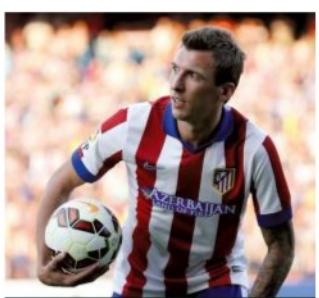
Realism dictates that this season it will all be about Madrid and Barcelona once again. In a league where more was spent on transfers by Real Madrid's B team, Castilla, who play in the third tier, than most top-flight clubs, many teams have long since given up trying to compete.

Valencia and Sevilla lost key players to Barcelona this summer, while Athletic Bilbao sold Ander Herrera to Manchester United. Survival, not success, is the key for many. But not Atletico. It will take more than Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, Rodriguez, Suarez, Gareth Bale, Neymar, Karim Benzema, Andres Iniesta, Kroos and Rakitic to make them surrender just yet.

Sid Lowe

Barcelona capture...Rakitic was rated the best midfielder in La Liga last season

Air shot...Simeone is hoisted by his squad after masterminding Atletico's title triumph


Striking buy...Atletico's Mandzukic–

SPANISH LA LIGA 2014-15

1 Almeria
2 Athletic Bilbao
3 Atletico Madrid
Getafe
Rayo Vallecano
Real Madrid
4 Barcelona
Espanyol
5 Celta Vigo
6 Cordoba
7 Deportivo La Coruna
8 Eibar
9 Elche
10 Granada
11 Levante
Valencia
12 Malaga
13 Real Sociedad (San Sebastian)
14 Sevilla
15 Villarreal

Team-by-team guide to the season

Big season...Cordoba will be playing in the top flight for the first time in 42 years

ALMERIA

Coach: Francisco Rodriguez
Key arrivals: *Teerasil Dangda (Muangthong United, Tha)*, Mauro Dos Santos (Murcia), Quique Gonzalez (Guadalajara), Tomer Hemed (Mallorca), Ruben Martinez (Rayo Vallecano), *Wellington Silva (Arsenal, Eng)*, *Thomas (At Madrid)*.
Key departures: Oscar Diaz (Valladolid), Rafita (Murcia), Esteban Suarez (Oviedo), Marcos Tebar (Brentford, Eng), Aleix Vidal (Sevilla).
The league's youngest coach is still around, but the sporting director has left for London, from where he will continue to act as advisor.

ATHLETIC BILBAO

Coach: Ernesto Valverde
Key arrivals: Borja Viguera (Alaves).
Key departures: *Unai Albizua (Tenerife)*, Raul Fernandez (Racing Santander), Ander Herrera (Manchester United, Eng), *Enric Saborit (Mallorca)*.
Back in the Champions League, the loss of Herrera is a big blow – but San Mames in Europe will be a wonderful sight.

ATLETICO MADRID

Coach: Diego Simeone
Key arrivals: *Cristian Ansaldi (Rubin, Rus)*, Angel Correa (San Lorenzo, Arg), Antoine Griezmann (Real Sociedad), Mario Mandzukic (B Munich, Ger), Miguel Angel Moya (Getafe), Jan Oblak (Benfica, Por), Guilherme Siqueira (Granada).
Key departures: Diego Costa (Chelsea, Eng), Adrian Lopez (Porto, Por), Filipe Luis (Chelsea, Eng), Diego Ribas (Fenerbahce, Tur), David Villa (New York City, USA).
The champions have managed the mood well despite the inevitable unpicking of their title-winning team. Siqueira, Mandzukic and Oblak are interesting signings and the president has promised more.

BARCELONA

Coach: Luis Enrique
Key arrivals: Claudio Bravo (Real Sociedad), Jeremy Mathieu (Valencia), Ivan Rakitic (Sevilla), Marc-Andre Ter Stegen (Borussia Monchengladbach, Ger), Luis Suarez (Liverpool, Eng).
Key departures: Isaac Cuenca (Deportivo La Coruna), Jonathan Dos Santos (Villarreal), Cesc Fabregas (Chelsea, Eng), Oier Olazabal (Granada), Jose Manuel Pinto (released), Carles Puyol (retired), Alexis Sanchez (Arsenal, Eng), *Cristian Tello (Porto, Por)*, Victor Valdes (unattached).
Barcelona's president announced a "profound renovation" in the team and that's certainly been the case, with over €100m spent. A shift in style as well as personnel is probable.

CELTA VIGO

Coach: Eduardo Berizzo
Key arrivals: Sergi Gomez (Barcelona), Pablo Hernandez (O'Higgins, Chl), Joaquin Larrivey (Rayo Vallecano), Carles Planas (Barcelona).
Key departures: Mario Bermejo (retired).
Luis Enrique took arguably Celta's best player with him as Rafinha returned to Barcelona after his loan, but there is plenty of talent in the side and they are worth watching.

CORDOBA

Coach: Albert Ferrer
Key arrivals: *Fede Cartabia (Valencia)*, Deivid (Las Palmas), Patrick Ekeng (Lausanne, Swi), *Fidel (Elche)*, Mike Havenaar (Vitesse, Hol), Jose Carlos (Rayo Vallecano), *Ryder Matos (Fiorentina, Ita)*.
Key departures: *Arturo (Alcorcon)*, *Bernardo Cruz (Racing Santander)*, *Fran Cruz (Alcorcon)*.
Led by the former Barcelona player Ferrer, Cordoba are back in the top flight for the first time in 42 years after a dramatic play-off victory... and they start at the Bernabeu. "It's a dream," says the president.

DEPORTIVO LA CORUNA

Coach: Victor Fernandez
Key arrivals: *Roberto Canella (Sporting Gijon)*, Isaac Cuenca (Barcelona), *Luis Farina (Benfica, Por)*, *Lucas Perez (PAOK, Gre)*, *Jose Rodriguez (Real Madrid)*.
Key departures: *Luis Fernandez (Lugo)*, Antonio Nunez (Recreativo Huelva).
Deportivo are back and so is one of the most famous coaches in the country. A welcome return for one of Spain's bigger clubs.

Chilean...Celta midfielder Hernandez

EIBAR

Coach: Gaizka Garitano
Key arrivals: Angel (Levante), Jaime Jimenez (Valladolid), Javi Lara (Ponferradina).
Key departures: Matias Ibanez (Lanus, Arg), Diego Jimenez (released), Urko Vera (released).
For the first time in their history, tiny Eibar are in the Spanish top flight, having won successive promotions from the Second Division B and the Second Division A. Their picturesque Ipurua ground in the Basque Country holds just 5,000 and they had to succeed in a share issue to avoid being prevented from taking up the slot that they had rightfully won on the pitch thanks to some extremely daft legislation. Spain is a better place for them.

ELCHE

Coach: Fran Escriba
Key arrivals: Faycal Fajr (Caen, Fra), Adrian Gonzalez (Rayo Vallecano), *Jonathas (Latina, Ita)*, Pedro Mosquera (Getafe), *Mario Pasalic (Chelsea, Eng)*, *Przemyslaw Tyton (PSV, Hol)*.
Key departures: *Fidel (Cordoba)*, Javi Flores (released), Sergio Mantecon (Cadiz), Alberto Rivera (released).
Escriba has built a well-organised, defensively sound side that managed to stay up after a first season in the top division for almost 25 years. There is sufficient stability to think he may be able to do the same again.

ESPANYOL

Coach: Sergio Gonzalez
Key arrivals: Anaitz Arbilla (Rayo Vallecano), Felipe Caicedo (Al Jazira, UAE), Alvaro Gonzalez (Zaragoza), Paco Montanes (Zaragoza), Salva Sevilla (Real Betis).
Key departures: Joan Capdevila (North East United, Ind), Simao Sabrosa (released).
Espanyol put their one-time player Gonzalez in charge after the departure of Javier Aguirre. Caicedo and Sevilla are interesting signings if he can get the best out of them.

■ PLAYERS IN *ITALICS* ARE ON LOAN ■ FOR ALL THE UP TO DATE TRANSFER NEWS IN LA LIGA GO TO WWW.WORLDSOCCER.COM/FEATURES/SPAIN-LA-LIGA

GETAFE

Coach: Cosmin Contra
Key arrivals: *Fredy Hinestroza (La Equidad, Col)*, Jonathan Lopez (Veria, Gre), *Michel (Valencia)*, Karim Yoda (Astra Giurgiu, Rom).
Key departures: Borja Fernandez (Atletico Kolkata, Ind), Jaime Gavilan (Levante), Pedro Mosquera (Elche), Miguel Angel Moya (At Madrid).
Contra arrived late last season, took over from Luis Garcia, and made Getafe a more aggressive side as they just about avoided relegation.

GRANADA

Coach: Joaquin Caparros
Key arrivals: Jean-Sylvain Babin (Alcorcon), *Juan Carlos (Braga, Por)*, Daniel Larsson (Valladolid), Javi Marquez (Mallorca), Oier Olazabal (Barcelona), *Abdoul Sissoko (Udinese, Ita)*.
Key departures: Brayan Angulo (Ludogorets, Bul), Yacine Brahimi (Porto, Por).
Last season Caparros described facing Barcelona as like "going to the dentist", but it's his teams that are normally painful to visit.

LEVANTE

Coach: Jose Luis Mendilibar
Key arrivals: Jaime Gavilan (Getafe), Rafael Martins (Audax, Bra), Keylor Navas (Real Madrid), Victor Perez (Valladolid).
Key departures: Angel (Eibar), Nagore (Alcorcon), Sergio Pinto (Fortuna Dusseldorf, Ger).

Glory...Malaga's Rosales (right) in Perth

Mendilibar took over after Caparros left for Granada, and likes his teams to push high up the pitch. At times it works, but at others it is suicidal. And goalkeeper Navas is no longer around to rescue the side if it all goes wrong.

MALAGA

Coach: Javi Gracia
Key arrivals: *Luis Alberto (Liverpool, Eng)*, Arthur Boka (Stuttgart, Ger), Ricardo Horta (Vitoria Setubal, Por), Roberto Rosales (Twente, Hol).
Key departures: Willy Caballero (Manchester City, Eng), Eliseu (Benfica, Por), Bartlomiej Pawlowski (Lechia Gdansk, Pol).
Gracia joined after his Osasuna side was relegated and has been keen to warn against artificially high expectations. Champions League football may be the recent past, but it is very definitely the past.

Return...Gonzalez played over 100 league games for Espnayol and is now their coach

RAYO VALLECANO

Coach: Paco Jemez
Key arrivals: Antonio Amaya (Real Betis), Diego Aguirre (Toledo), Derek Boateng (Fulham, Eng), Jozabed (Real Jaen), Manucho (Valladolid), Jorge Morcillo (Recreativo Huelva), Alex Moreno (Mallorca), Alejandro Pozuelo Swansea, Eng), Quini (Real Madrid).
Key departures: Anaitz Arbilla (Espanyol), Alex Galvez (Bremen, Ger), Adrian Gonzalez (Elche), Jose Carlos (Cordoba), Joaquin Larrivey (Celta), Ruben Martinez (Almeria), *Johan Mojica (Valladolid)*.
Rayo survived again last term – and did so playing fun football. It will be a battle again, particularly with Larrivey departing and the end of Saul Niguez's loan, but they have upset the odds before.

REAL MADRID

Coach: Carlo Ancelotti
Key arrivals: Toni Kroos (Bayern Munich, Ger), Keylor Navas (Levante), James Rodriguez (Monaco, Fra).
Key departures: *Casemiro (Porto, Por)*, Alvaro Morata (Juventus, Ita).
The European champions have made a significant upgrade with the purchase of Kroos and Rodriguez, but making it all function smoothly could yet prove complicated.

REAL SOCIEDAD

Coach: Jagoba Arrasate
Key arrivals: Esteban Granero (QPR, Eng), Geronimo Rulli (Estudiantes, Arg), Alfred Finnbogason (Heerenveen, Hol).
Key departures: Claudio Bravo (Barcelona), Antoine Griezmann (At Madrid), Javier Ros (Mallorca).
There was something about last season that never quite convinced; good runs rarely lasted long enough and the coach appeared to harbour doubts. They will miss Griezmann.

SEVILLA

Coach: Unai Emery
Key arrivals: Alejandro Arribas (Osasuna), *Iago Aspas (Liverpool, Eng)*, Mariano Barbosa (Las Palmas), Grzegorz Krychowiak (Reims, Fra), *Denis Suarez (Barcelona)*, Aleix Vidal (Almeria).
Key departures: Diego Perotti (Genoa, Ita), Ivan Rakitic (Barcelona).
Often under pressure, Emery finished last season with his reputation enhanced and his team growing, eventually winning the Europa League title. However, Rakitic was central to everything they did and his departure will be hugely significant.

VALENCIA

Coach: Nuno
Key arrivals: Rodrigo De Paul (Racing, Arg), Andre Gomes (Benfica, Por), Rodrigo (Benfica, Por).
Key departures: Juan Bernat (Bayern Munich, Ger), *Fede Cartabia (Cordoba)*, Ricardo Costa (Al Sailiya, Qat), Seydou Keita (Roma, Ita), Jeremy Mathieu (Barcelona), *Michel (Getafe)*.
The Peter Lim era begins, even though he has not legally taken over the club yet. Financially sound once more, they may be able to compete again.

Clever...Marcelino has impressed many

VILLARREAL

Coach: Marcelino
Key arrivals: *Denis Cheryshev (Real Madrid)*, Jonathan Dos Santos (Barcelona), Javier Espinosa (Barcelona), Antonio Rukavina (Valladolid).
Key departures: Jeremy Perbet (Istanbul BB, Tur)
Villarreal continue to grow and have so far resisted the advances of bigger clubs hovering over their players. In Marcelino they have one of the league's cleverest coaches.

WorldSoccer.com

News, views, features, goals, galleries!

Packed with **original content** and some of the **best blogs** on the web

PLUS

EVERY WEEK: columns from Brian Glanville and Keir Radnedge

WEBSITE QR CODE
To go directly to the World Soccer site just scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also go there by clicking on the following link bit.ly/HjSU1E

Champions opt for coaching change

Wheels of fortune...new coach Sousa arrives at Basle's training ground on his bike

For a club usually so conservative when it comes to such appointments, Basle have undertaken a radical change of direction by naming former Portugal midfielder Paulo Sousa as their new coach.

The 43-year-old, who was in charge of the Maccabi Tel Aviv side that lost to the Swiss champions in both the Champions League and the Europa League last season, is now tasked with leading Basle to a sixth successive league title.

Over the last 50 years, the club's hot seat has been almost exclusively the preserve of German or Swiss coaches, with only Italy's Salvatore Andracchio breaking the sequence with two short spells as caretaker in 1997.

Sousa has absolutely no previous connection with Basle or Switzerland. His playing career took him from Portugal to Italy, Germany, Greece and Spain, while as a coach he has worked in England, Wales, Hungary and then Israel.

"I hope Paulo Sousa will bring a new way of thinking to this team and will lead with clear authority and contribute ideas which, for us, are partly new," said club president Bernhard Heusler on the coach's appointment in May.

As a player, Sousa won the Champions League with Juventus in 1996 and then again with Borussia Dortmund the following year. The latter stage of his career, however, was plagued by injury and he retired at the age of 31, having won 51 caps for his country.

His coaching career has so far been a mixed bag. He began with Queens Park Rangers in the English second tier but was sacked after just six months with the club claiming he had divulged sensitive information. He then spent the 2009-10 season at Swansea City, again in the Championship, just missing out on the play-offs, then moved to Leicester City where he was fired after three months.

That was followed by 18 months at Videoton in Hungary and one season at Maccabi Tel Aviv, where he won the Israeli league and led the team to the last 32 of the Europa League – where they lost 3-0 to a Basle side who had earlier beaten them in the third qualifying round of the Champions League.

Despite his patchy record, Sousa is clearly ambitious and said at his official presentation he believed he would one day win the Champions League...although he did not say if he expected that to be with Basle!

It was followed by a quick reality check, as he added: "We need to know about the reality of football and the players need to know exactly what we are looking for.

"My special goal is to have a great connection between the team, the players and our supporters, to give lots of emotion to our supporters. I want them to be counting the days to the next game."

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED JULY 19, 2014
SEASON ENDS JUNE 7, 2015

Basle may be a big deal in Switzerland but they still continue to lose their best players abroad, particularly to the Bundesliga. The latest are goalkeeper Yann Sommer, to Borussia Monchengladbach, and midfielder Valentin Stocker, who has joined Hertha Berlin. World Cup defender Fabian Schar was still there when the season kicked off in July but he is also expected to go.

Tomas Vaclik has joined from Sparta Prague to replace Sommer, while last year's Swiss league top scorer, Albania's Shkelzen Gashi, has arrived from Grasshoppers. Argentinian defender Walter Samuel has also been signed.

Basle, who have an automatic place in this season's Champions League group stage, continue to replenish their side with players from the youth ranks, with 20-year-old left-back Naser Aliji and 17-year-old midfielder Breel Embolo scoring in the 2-1 season opening win at Aarau.

Basle's dominance is becoming a worry for the Super League, and the gulf between them and the rest will only continue to get bigger as they gobble up more prize money from their regular participation in European competition.

Grasshoppers, second for each of the past two seasons, Zurich and Young Boys would appear the most likely challengers, but their best hope is that the Sousa experiment goes badly wrong.

Aside from Basle, there were also new men in charge at Aarau, where Sven Christ took over from Rene Weiler, and, of course, Sion.

Having got through last season with "only" three coaches, Sion trumpeted the hiring of former Italy defender Claudio Gentile. But his no-show at his unveiling and first training session left even fiery president Christian Constantin lost for words. It emerged there had been a disagreement over Gentile's contract, so Frederic Chassot took charge instead.

Vaduz, from neighbouring Liechtenstein, will play in the top flight this term, replacing relegated Lausanne-Sport.

Brian Homewood

Potential...Basle defender Aliji

SWISS SUPER LEAGUE 2014-15

1 Aarau
2 Basle
3 Grasshoppers Zurich
4 Lucerne
5 Sion
6 St Gallen
7 Thun
8 Vaduz
9 Young Boys

Diego brings new hope to Fenerbahce

Crowd pleaser...Diego will look to wow the Sukru Saracoglu faithful with his box of tricks

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTS AUGUST 30, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY 30, 2015

Only once in the new millennium has a non-Istanbul side prevailed in the championship race – Bursaspor in 2010 – and in the forthcoming campaign there is every likelihood that Besiktas, Fenerbahce and Galatasaray will continue to proudly guard their national fiefdom, blowing away the provincials and effectively deciding the title destination on derby days.

After the huge satisfaction of wresting the league away from Galatasaray last spring, Fenerbahce suffered a blow when promising midfielder Salih Ucan was snapped up on a two-year loan by Roma. However, the free transfer arrival of Brazilian no10 Diego should more than compensate.

Diego's assortment of tricks, impish creativity and dead-ball skills are bound to be rapturously received at the Sukru Saracoglu Stadium, and while the ex-Werder Bremen, Wolfsburg and Atletico Madrid playmaker has never been the most consistent of performers, his flashes of cheeky inspiration are always worth the admission money.

Reigning champions do tend to lose focus and hunger, so much will depend on the ability of canny coach Ersun Yanal to push the right motivational buttons. Last season, Yanal's first at the Fenerbahce helm, he successfully hard-wired belief, heart, grit and single-mindedness into his side, and should these characteristics stand the test of time, a 20th domestic crown could be theirs for the taking.

The song very much remains the same as far as Fener's key individual elements are concerned: the sharpshooting of African strikers Emmanuel Emenike and Moussa Sow; the trademark energy and commitment in wide areas of Dirk Kuyt; the protection offered to the back line by midfield enforcer Mehmet Topal; and the thrust of raiding left-back Caner Erkin, who to the delight of the club faithful, extended his contract this summer.

Their weakest link? The rather ponderous central defensive pairing of Portugal international Bruno Alves and Bekir Irtegun.

For Turkey's most-decorated club Galatasaray, second place is equivalent to a slap in the face, and after dispensing with the irascible Roberto Mancini, the "Cimbom" have once again gone down the Italian route, this time recruiting *Azzurri* World Cup 2014 boss Cesare Prandelli.

Anxious to bounce back after his team's early flight home from Brazil, Prandelli has three priorities: to make Gala cuter tactically and sharper on the counter-attack, to give them more of a killer instinct by transforming last term's many draws into victories and to add a bit of youthful rigour to an ageing side.

Prandelli would dearly love to incorporate a sliver of Serie A quality, but up to now all the signings have been Turkish, including Trabzonspor's attacking midfielder Olcan Adil, on-loan keeper Sinan Bolat from Porto, midfielders Endogan Adili from Basle and PSV's Kaan Baysal, and winger Sinan Gumus from Stuttgart.

While veteran striker Didier Drogba took advantage of his free-agent status to rejoin Chelsea, much better news was the loyalty shown by Uruguayan keeper Fernando Muslera, chief strategist Selcuk Inan and front-man Burak Yilmaz, all of whom were happy to sign new deals.

Will Dutch playmaker Wesley Sneijder remain on board? "Yes" says Galatasaray president Unal Aysal; "no" claim the Premier League clubs eyeing up his €20million release clause.

Besiktas, intelligently marshalled by Croat coach Slaven Bilic, will hang their hat on an expensive new strike force, splashing out nearly €17m on Chelsea's Demba Ba and the fast-improving former Eintracht Frankfurt and Gaziantepspor hit man Cenk Tosun.

Trabzonspor and Kasimpasa are the best positioned of the rest to make an impact. Sixth last season, the latter have spent heavily on Switzerland striker Eren Derdiyok, while Trabzonspor pulled off a coup in landing forwards Deniz Yilmaz and Serdar Gurler from Elazigspor.

Nick Bidwell

TURKISH SUPER LIG 2014-15

1 Akhisar Belediyespor (Manisa)
2 Balikesirspor
3 Besiktas (Istanbul)
Fenerbahce
Galatasaray
Istanbul BB
Kasimpasa
4 Bursaspor
5 Caykur Rizespor
6 Eskisehirspor
7 Gaziantepspor
8 Genclerbirligi (Ankara)
9 Karabukspor
10 Kayseri Erciyesspor
11 Konyaspor
12 Mersin
13 Sivasspor
14 Trabzonspor

Civil unrest sees champions relocate

United...Dynamo Kiev and Shakhtar Donetsk fans march in support of a united Ukraine, their banner reading "glory to the nation"

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED JULY 25, 2014
SEASON ENDS APRIL 28, 2015

The annexation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia earlier this year led to the region's relegated Tavriya Simferopol and ninth-placed Sevastopol being forced to break all association with the Ukraine Football Federation by the new authorities. Meanwhile, domestic football continues to pay a heavy price for the unrest in the south east of the country, with only 14 teams now taking part in this season's top flight.

Of those that are competing, many – including reigning champions Shakhtar Donetsk – have been forced to move away from local bases and make alternative arrangements for their home fixtures.

For the first half of the season at least, Shakhtar will stage league games 600 miles away from Donetsk, at the Arena Lviv. The club's CEO, Serhiy Palkin, explained: "The issue of the safety of players is the main priority of our club. We will be based, to train and play, only in the cities where the security of the side is guaranteed.

"Naturally, nobody is going to bring players to where fighting is going on and there is a threat to their lives."

Metalurh Donetsk and promoted Olympik Donetsk have also had to relocate, as have Zorya Luhansk, who will groundshare in Zaporizhya for domestic games and host Europa League matches in Kiev.

While Shakhtar made a good start to life in their new temporary home – beating Dynamo Kiev 2-0 in the Ukraine Super Cup, after which Palkin devoted the victory to "Donetsk, Donbass and peace" – they have already encountered other problems. After pre-season training in Switzerland, six players – Brazilians Alex Teixeira, Douglas Costa, Fred, Ismaili, Dentinho and Argentinian Facundo Ferreyra – initially refused to return to Ukraine.

"We are afraid to return to a region where fighting is going on," said Teixeira. "The only thing I'm thinking about now is the security of my family."

Costa added: "I want to make clear that I do not want to leave the club. I love Shakhtar and Donetsk but I'm afraid to stay there. We all are at risk in the region. It is a threat to our lives.

"We still want to play but offered to stay in Switzerland until the situation in Ukraine improves. We want to be part of Shakhtar but it is necessary to have safe conditions to train and play."

Metalist Kharkiv were also hit by non-returnees as Argentinians Jose Sosa, Jonathan Cristaldo and Alejandro Gomez stayed away after a training camp in Austria. They have not, however, received much in the way of sympathy from the club.

"Our position on this issue is unequivocal," says Metalist sports director Alexandr Notchenko. "The players must fulfil the terms of their contracts.

"They are obliged to return to the club, otherwise we will impose sanctions indicated in the contracts."

Oleg Zadernovsky

> "I respect the decision of those who decided to continue to play for Shakhtar"
>
> Stay-away Brazilian midfielder Alex Teixeira

Super Cup win...Shakhtar's Srna

UKRAINIAN PREMIER LEAGUE 2014-15

1 Chornomorets (Odessa)
2 Dnipro (Dnipropetrovsk)
3 Dynamo Kiev (Kiev)
Olimpik Donetsk
4 Hoverla (Uzhhorod)
5 Illichivets (Mariupol)
6 Karpaty Lviv (Lviv)
Metalurh Donetsk
Shakhtar Donetsk
7 Metalist Kharkiv
8 Metalurh Zaporizhya (Zaporizhya)
Zorya Luhansk
9 Volyn (Lutsk)
10 Vorskla (Poltava)

Space for Rodriguez?

Carlo Ancelotti must find a way to accommodate Real Madrid's latest star signing, says Jonathan Wilson

Room for two more...Ancelotti could struggle to fit Rodriguez (left) into his formation, while World Cup winner Kroos is competing in a midfield congested with creative talent

There are, essentially, two ways of building a team: you can start with the philosophy and acquire players to fit it, or you can start by signing gifted players and trust your coach to find a way for them to play together.

The vast majority of clubs lie somewhere between the two extremes, but since the days of Santiago Bernabeu, Real Madrid have tended to the latter. Florentino Perez wasn't dissuaded from that approach even by the failure of the galacticos era, and this summer he has followed a familiar path with the arrival of James Rodriguez and Toni Kroos for a combined total of €110million.

The question is how they can be accommodated into a team that were, after all, crowned European champions for the 10th time in May.

The good news is that Real have, in Carlo Ancelotti, a coach who is a specialist in dealing with the whims of acquisition-happy owners. At Milan, he worked under Silvio Berlusconi and went along grudgingly with the owner's demand that Filippo Inzaghi and Andriy Shevchenko should be played together. Since then, at Chelsea under Roman Abramovich, at Paris Saint-German under the Qataris and at Real, he has accepted his job is to take a giddy array of stars and make a constellation from them.

> "Madrid's history will tell you that they always want to have the best players and ones with a future"
>
> Carlo Ancelotti on the signing of James Rodriguez

It can take time, though. Last season, when the issue was fitting in Gareth Bale, Isco and Asier Illarramendi, it wasn't until November that he settled on the 4-3-3 set-up – with Angel Di Maria breaking forward from the left side of midfield – that ultimately brought success in the Champions League Final.

A harsh critic might suggest that Ancelotti needed that Champions League triumph to redeem the season. Had Real lost, it would have been a disappointing campaign – particularly given Barcelona's struggles – to have finished with only the Spanish Cup. It is a remarkable feature of Ancelotti's managerial career that he has won more Champions Leagues than league titles.

The problem now is where to fit Rodriguez into a forward line that already features Cristiano Ronaldo, Karim Benzema, Bale, Isco and Jese; something complicated by the fact that the midfield, with Luka Modric and Di Maria, Sami Khedira, Xabi Alonso and Illarramendi, is already packed with creativity.

Last season, Ancelotti's task was made simpler by the departure of Mesut Ozil to Arsenal and, both for squad harmony and

to comply with financial fairplay requirements, there will almost certainly be at least one major sale this summer. It appears that Di Maria, despite his man-of-the-match performance in the Champions League Final, is the nearest to the exit – which may make sense if players are ranked by glamour, but is likely to create a whole host of new tactical issues.

Di Maria was reportedly close to leaving last summer and was forced to adopt a deeper-lying position after staying. But he thrived and became the key to the way Real Madrid played.

If necessary, he had the discipline to sit deep alongside Alonso and Modric and, as he showed in the Champions League semi-final victories over Bayern Munich, he is a master at leading the counter-attack, adept both at carrying the ball from deep and at choosing the right time for a pass.

In games in which Real Madrid played against a massed defence, he could operate as a left-winger as Ronaldo drifted infield, while still having the awareness to cover for Marcelo when he overlapped from full-back. It's hard to see who else in the squad could realistically replicate that role.

And if Ancelotti sticks to 4-3-3, that means there is a danger, against better sides, of there being no link between the midfield and forward lines.

Rodriguez has said it would be a "dream" to play with Ronaldo, Benzema and Bale. It may be that he's merely speculating, but if that comment was based on conversations he has had with Ancelotti, it suggests a shift to 4-2-3-1, with the Colombian behind Benzema and flanked by the two most expensive players in football history.

The formation initially sounds enticing, even if there is no space for Di Maria, but the risk is that Real Madrid end up with too many players in too small a space. The front three worked last season because Benzema dropped off the front line, creating space for the athletic surges of Ronaldo and Bale. If Rodriguez is operating as a no10 there is less space for Benzema to move into, and that could lead to overcrowding and, more troublingly, a lack of the verticality, of Bale or Ronaldo suddenly barrelling through from deep, that made Real so thrilling at times last season.

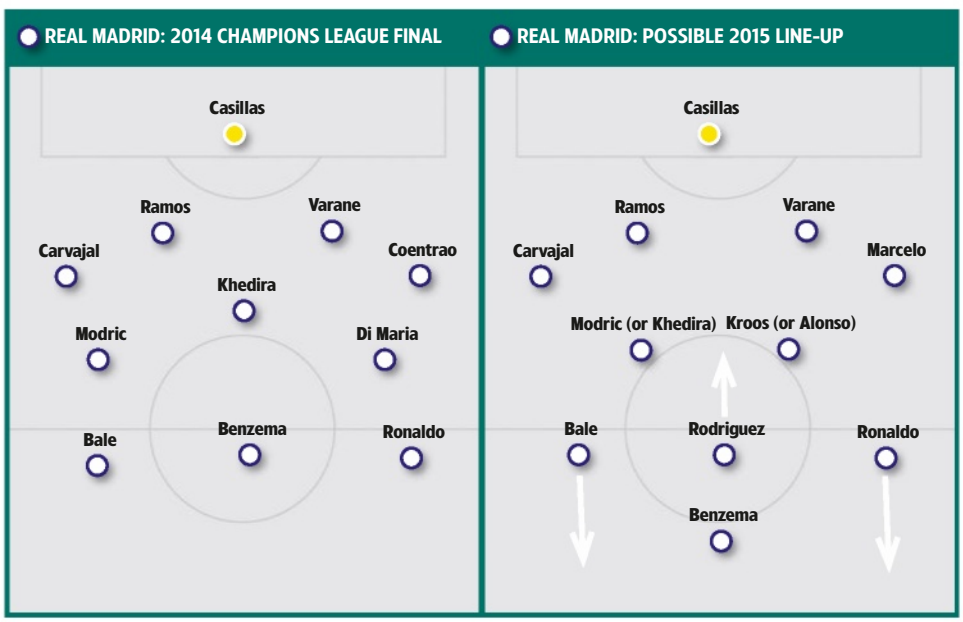
And that's without even mentioning Isco who, at 22, may accept a role as a reserve, and Kroos who, as a 24-year-old World Cup-winner, probably won't.

The German, at least, can play either as an attacking or holding midfielder – some have suggested that his passing isn't quite quick enough to play as a creator at the very highest level and that the deeper-lying position is more suited to him – but that still doesn't create an obvious space for him. If the shape is 4-2-3-1, he is either competing with Rodriguez for the central creative role or with Modric, Alonso, Illarramendi and Khedira for one of two deeper slots – a glut that has led to suggestions that Khedira could be sold.

That's if the shape is 4-2-3-1. If Ancelotti sticks with 4-3-3, the pressure is eased on the deeper-lying players, but it probably means Rodriguez operating as Ronaldo's back-up on the left, with Isco relegated even further down in the pecking order. Ronaldo could become a central forward – something he did to some effect in his days with Manchester United but has been reluctant to do since.

In the history of the game there have been very few squads that have contained such talent as Real Madrid's. Ancelotti's job is to forge a team from those riches. It's not an unfamiliar job for him, but that doesn't make it any easier. WS

Case in point...Di Maria's versatility cannot be replicated by anyone in the current Madrid squad



Master juggler...Ancelotti

WorldSoccer

SEND THIS COUPON TO

UK World Soccer Subscriptions, FREEPOST CY1061,
Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3BR (No stamp required)

	Full Price	Offer Price	Saving
Annual Direct Debit	~~£59.99~~	£38.99	35%
2 Years	~~£119.98~~	£83.49	30%
1 Year	~~£59.99~~	£44.99	25%

YES! I would like to subscribe to World Soccer

☐ **Pay £38.99** per year by Direct Debit (UK only) **saving 35%** on the full price of £59.99

☐ 2 year UK credit/debit card subscription, **paying £83.49 saving 30%** off the full price of £119.98

☐ 1 year UK credit/debit card subscription, **paying £44.99 saving 25%** off the full price of £59.99

YOUR DETAILS

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss: Forename:

Surname:

If you would like to receive emails from IPC Media and World Soccer containing news, special offers and product and service information and take part in our magazine research via email, please include your email below.

Email:

Address:

Zip/Postcode:

Country:

Home Tel No: (inc. area code)

Would you like to receive messages to your mobile from IPC Media and World Soccer containing news, special offers, product and service information and take part in our research? If yes, please include your mobile phone number here.

Mobile:

Date of birth: D D M M Y Y Y Y

PAYMENT DETAILS

I enclose cheque/international money order for £_____
made payable to IPC Media Ltd.

Or please debit my ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Visa Debit ☐ Amex ☐ Maestro (UK only)

Card No:

Start Date: (Maestro only) Issue No: (Maestro only) / Expiry date: /

Signature: (I am over 18) Date:

Pay £38.99 per year by Direct Debit

INSTRUCTION TO YOUR BANK OR BUILDING SOCIETY TO PAY BY DIRECT DEBIT
For office use only. Originator's reference - 764 221

Name of bank:

Address of bank:

Postcode:

Account name:

Sort code: Account no:

Please pay IPC Media Ltd direct debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with IPC Media Ltd and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank or building society.

Signature: (I am over 18) Date:

Offer closes 30th September 2014. introductory offer open to new subscribers only. Please allow up to six weeks for delivery of your first subscription issue (up to eight weeks overseas). The full subscription rate is for 1 year, paying £59.99 for 13 issues. If the magazine ordered changes frequency per annum, we will honour the number of issues paid for, not the term of the subscription. **For enquiries from the UK please call: 0844 848 0848, for overseas please call: +44 (0)330 3330 233 or e-mail: ipcsubsquadrantsubs.com.** World Soccer, published by IPC Media Limited, will collect your personal information to process your order. World Soccer, and IPC Media would like to contact you by post or telephone to promote and ask your opinion on our magazines and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to hear from IPC Media ☐. IPC Media may occasionally pass your details to carefully selected organisations so that they can contact you by telephone or post with regards to promoting and researching their products and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to be contacted ☐. IPC Media who publish World Soccer, would like to send messages to your mobile with offers from carefully selected organisations and brands, promoting and researching their products and services. If you want to receive messages please tick here ☐. IPC would like to email you with offers from carefully selected organisations and brands, promoting and researching their productsand services. If you want to receive these messages please tick here ☐.

16V

WorldSoccer

GLOBAL FOOTBALL SINCE 1960

- Subscribe today and never miss an issue
- Join the most knowledgeable people in football
- Delivered direct to your door wherever you live in the world
- Money back guarantee – if you find World Soccer is not for you then we will be happy to refund any unmailed issues

OVERSEAS RATES

SAVE UP TO 30%

+44 (0) 330 3330 233

quote code **16V** or visit

www.worldsoccersubs.com/IWSWB

BY PHONE

0844 848 0848

Quote code 16V

7 days a week from 8am to 9pm (UK time). Overseas:+44 (0)330 3330 233

SUBSCRIBE TODAY AND SAVE UP TO 35%*

*When you pay by annual Direct Debit

THE DIRECT DEBIT GUARANTEE • This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits • If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit IPC Media Ltd. will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request IPC Media Ltd. to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request • If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by IPC Media Ltd. or your bank or building society you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society – If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when IPC Media Ltd. asks you to • You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

ORDER ONLINE

worldsoccersubs.com/IWSWB

Complete the coupon opposite

QUICK • EASY • AVAILABLE WORLDWIDE

World Soccer®

Now available on tablets & smartphones

- Download *World Soccer* on the go
- Enjoy great photos in brilliant clarity
- Available worldwide

Available on

nook | Google play | kindle fire | Available on the App Store

Scan this QR code or log onto bit.ly/ZgewnM

Follow @worldsoccermag Like World Soccer Magazine

Please rate and review the World Soccer app

MISCELLANEOUS

SCORE EVERY TIME

maxmedix
VIAMAN
MALE FORMULA
natural formula designed to support
Male Sexual Function
Food Supplement
30 Capsules

shytobuy.com
0207 084 7595

The DORSET GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB
Near Wareham
t: 01929 472244 www.dorsetgolfresort.com

The only five-star Gold Award Resort of its kind in Dorset, as acknowledged for the last four consecutive years by Visit Britain, The Resort is a 'must visit' for any golfers. Home to 27 holes of Championship Golf, with full USGA specification greens and tees to the highest standards it is extremely well maintained.

The 12 Fairy tale Scandinavian-style Resort houses are made entirely from Nordic wood and set in a quiet wooded glade. The Houses have naturally oiled pine surrounds and are fully furnished with a private sauna – everything that ensures five star accommodation.

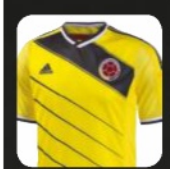
Stay from £69.95pppn

T: 01929 472244 | W: www.dorsetgolfresort.com

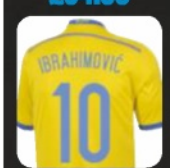
To advertise in WorldSoccer please call the team on 020 3148 2600

FOOTBALL KITS

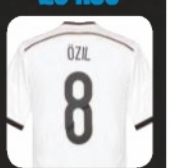
subside sports


14-15 COLOMBIA HOME SHIRT £54.99

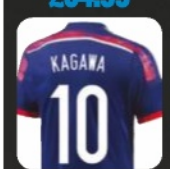
14-15 COLOMBIA HOME FALCAO SHIRT £64.99



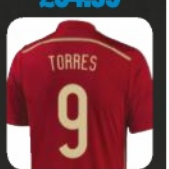
14-15 SWEDEN HOME IBRAHIMOVIC SHIRT £64.99



14-15 GERMANY HOME ÖZIL SHIRT £64.99



14-15 JAPAN HOME KAGAWA SHIRT £64.99



14-15 SPAIN HOME TORRES SHIRT £64.99

TEL: 0845 8382442
EMAIL: SALES@SUBSIDE.CO.UK
WWW.SUBSIDE.CO.UK

VIDEO/CINE FILMS

Soccer Matches on DVD 1954-2014
World Cups, Euro Champs, Euro Cups, Copa America, Maradona, Pele, Cruyff, Brazil, Milan, Juventus, Barcelona, Southern America, Europe, Asia.
Email for 4,000 Games List
sammi271@btinternet.com
Very cheap prices

PROGRAMMES

FREE
FOOTBALL PROGRAMMES
To receive a FREE programme plus a copy of our latest catalogue (listing several thousand different mint condition Big Match, League, Scottish, Irish, Foreign and Non-League teams programmes etc.) please send your name and address to:
STEVE EARL FOOTBALL PROGRAMMES (DEPT.WS)
BROAD STREET, BUNGAY, SUFFOLK, NR35 1AH, ENGLAND
or phone 01986 892621 or visit www.footballprogs.co.uk
2014 World Cup Programme (English Edition) £12 (inc. p&p)
(Credit/Debit Cards & PayPal accepted)

INTERNET

Squarepass.org
for all your fantasy football needs. Play, donate and support your team.
£15,000 in prizes.

PRO-DIRECT
the professional's choice

PRO PERSONALISATION
BOOT iD
PRO-DIRECT MAKE IT YOURS

EXPRESS
NEXT DAY DELIVERY

PRO-DIRECT SOCCER PRESENTS

pitch black collection

Embrace the classic and roll with the modern in the adidas Pitch Black Collection. Featuring the Adizero F50, Predator, Nitrocharge and 11Pro, you'll become deadly in the dark.

SEE THE FULL PITCH BLACK COLLECTION INCLUDING JUNIORS ONLINE - PRICES FROM £28

ADIZERO
FROM £30

PREDATOR
FROM £32

EXCLUSIVE

NITROCHARGE
FROM £32

11PRO
FROM £28

WWW.PRODIRECTSOCCER.COM

World Service

The ultimate global news & results section

Contents

INTERNATIONALS

92 African Nations Cup
92 East Asian Cup
92 Friendlies
92 Euro 2016 qualifying (fixtures)
93 Asian Cup finals (fixtures)

PREVIEW

94 Bosnia-Herzegovina/Croatia/Hungary/Israel
96 Montenegro/Northern Ireland/Romania/Serbia
98 Slovakia/Slovenia/Wales

CLUB FOOTBALL

100 UEFA Champions League
100 Europa League
100 European leagues
102 Libertadores Cup
102 South American leagues
103 Central & North America
103 Africa
104 Asia
105 Oceania

Champions League clash...Legia Warsaw's Michal Zyro (left) and Keith Fahey of St Patrick's Athletic

Champions...Recopa winners Atletico Mineiro

World Service

AUSTRALIA

Hosts schedule

The 2015 Asian Cup hosts will warm up for January's tournament with friendlies against Belgium, in Liege on September 4, and away to UAE and Qatar in October.

Ange Postecoglou's side are also hoping to arrange a second European match in September and two home games in November.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

CAF take action

Despite beating Mauritania 3-1 on aggregate, Equatorial Guinea were disqualified from the African Nations Cup qualifying campaign after it was ruled that Thierry Fidjeu, a player of Cameroonian origin, had been ineligible to play. Yet the 31-year-old striker is hardly a newcomer to the Equatorial Guinea set-up, having played for his adopted country at the tournament's 2012 finals.

Ineligible...Fidjeu

This is the first time CAF have taken action against Equatorial Guinea for using foreign players despite several previous complaints from opponents. In 2011 they competed at the Women's World Cup in Germany with a team full of Brazilian-born players.

GERMANY

Euro Under-19 champs

Hertha Berlin midfielder Hany Mukhtar scored the only goal of the game as Germany beat Portugal in the Final of the European Under-19 Championship, which was held in Hungary.

Mukhtar's 39th-minute strike saw Germany win the trophy for a second time, having previously been

Internationals

2015 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS

3rd round

1st legs

July 19: Botswana 2 Guinea-Bissau 0; Sierra Leone 2 Seychelles 0[1]; Uganda 2 Mauritania[2] 0.
July 20: Benin 1 Malawi 0; Congo 2 Rwanda 0; Lesotho 1 Kenya 0; Tanzania 2 Mozambique 2.
[1]Sierra Leone progress to next stage after Seychelles withdrew from 2nd leg
[2]Mauritania lost to Equatorial Guinea in the 2nd round but progressed after Equatorial Guinea were banned for fielding an ineligible player

2015 EAST ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

1st round

Played in Harmon, Guam
July 21: Mongolia 4 Northern Mariana Islands 0; Guam 0 Macau 0.
July 23: Northern Mariana Islands 2 Macau 1; Guam 2 Mongolia 0.
July 25: Macau 3 Mongolia 2; Guam 5 Northern Mariana Islands 0.

EAST ASIAN CUP QUALS – 1ST ROUND – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guam (Q)	3	2	1	0	7	0	7
Macau	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Mongolia	3	1	0	2	6	5	3
N Mariana Is	3	1	0	2	2	10	3

Guam qualify for 2nd round, to which Hong Kong, North Korea and Taiwan qualified automatically

FRIENDLIES

Wednesday, June 18
June 18 - Shenyang
China 2 (Yu Hanchao 56, Gao Di 89)
Macedonia 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Tong (HK)
China: Zeng Cheng - Cai Huikang (Liu Jianye 68), Zhang Linpeng, Liao Lisheng (Sun Ke 85), Ren Hang, Wu Xi (Zhang Jiaqi 81), Zhang Chengdong, Gao Lin (Dong Xuesheng 86), Yu Hanchao (Yu Hai 68), Chen Zijie (Gao Di 68), Mei Fang.
Macedonia: Naumovski - Damchevski, Cuculi, Najdenov, Lena (Bojku 71), Velkovski, Illijoski (Simonovski 81), Ljamchevski (Brdarovski 46), Siljanovski (Djelil 46), Todorovski (Radeski 73), Avramovski (K Markoski 69).

Saturday, June 21
June 21 - Sidoarjo
Indonesia 4 (Gonzales 4, Jufriyanto 45+4, Zamrun pen 61, Hartono 87)
Pakistan 0
HT: 2-0
Sent off: S Hussain (Pakistan) 25min

Sunday, June 22
June 22 - Jinan
China 0
Macedonia 0
China: Wang Dalei - Li Ang (Dong Xuesheng 65), Rong Hao (Wu Xi 84), Zhang Linpeng, Dai Lin, Zhao Xuri, Sun Ke (Yu Hanchao 74), Zhang Wenzhao (Wu Lei 65), Ren Hang, Zhang Chengdong (Yu Yang 65), Gao Di (Chen Zijie 74).
Macedonia: Efremov - Damchevski, Cuculi, Najdenov (Ljamchevski 71), Lena (R Markoski 70), Velkovski (Djelil 81), Simonovski (Ilijoski 61), Siljanovski, Todorovski, Avramovski (Bojku 90+2), K Markoski (Radeski 46).

Wednesday, June 25
June 25 - Malang
Indonesia 2 (Samsul 5, Siswanto 81)
Nepal 0
HT: 1-0

Sunday, June 29
June 29 - Shenzhen
China 1 (Gao Lin 74)
Mali 3 (Mohamed Traore 37, A B Sylla 67, Mamadou Sidibe 90+2)
HT: 0-1

Tuesday, July 1
July 1 - Gaborone
Botswana 4 (Ramatlhakwane 40, Lemponye Tshireletso 48, Phuduhudu 68, Phiri 75)
Tanzania 2 (Khamis 36, Bocco pen 85)
HT: 1-1

Wednesday, July 2
July 2 - Thu Dau Mot
Vietnam 6 (Nguyen Hai Anh 9, 15, Le Cong Vinh 19, 33, 51, Nguyen Van Quyet 86)
Myanmar 0
HT: 4-0

Sunday, July 6
July 6 - Lilongwe
Malawi 1 (Msowoya 6)
Mozambique 1 (Fernandes 62)
HT: 1-0
Game played over 2 x 40-minute halves

Friday, July 11
July 11 - Lugogo
Uganda 1 (Miya 27)
Seychelles 0
HT: 1-0

Saturday, July 12
July 12 - Kigali
Rwanda 1 (Tuyisenge 21)
Gabon 0
HT: 1-0

Monday, July 14
July 14 - Gaborone
Botswana 2 (Ogopotse 66, Makgantai 86)
Lesotho 0
HT: 0-0

July 14 - Al Wakrah
Qatar 2 (Muftah 39, Bakur 54)
Indonesia 2 (Salampessy 1, Bachdim 90+2)
HT: 1-1

Tuesday, July 15
July 15 - Nairobi
Kenya 0
Burundi 0
Sent off: Wanyama (Kenya) 58min

July 15 - Kampala
Uganda 0
Malawi 0

Sunday, July 27
July 27 - Libreville
Gabon 0
Rwanda 1 (Kagere 76)
HT: 0-1

EURO 2016 QUALIFIERS

Fixtures

Group A
2014
September 9
Czech Republic v Holland
Iceland v Turkey
Kazakhstan v Latvia
October 10
Holland v Kazakhstan
Latvia v Iceland
Turkey v Czech Republic
October 13
Iceland v Holland
Kazakhstan v Czech Republic
Latvia v Turkey
November 16
Czech Republic v Iceland
Holland v Latvia
Turkey v Kazakhstan
2015
March 28
Czech Republic v Latvia
Holland v Turkey
Kazakhstan v Iceland
June 12
Iceland v Czech Republic
Kazakhstan v Turkey
Latvia v Holland
September 3
Czech Republic v Kazakhstan
Holland v Iceland
Turkey v Latvia
September 6
Iceland v Kazakhstan
Latvia v Czech Republic
Turkey v Holland
October 10
Czech Republic v Turkey
Iceland v Latvia
Kazakhstan v Holland
October 13
Holland v Czech Republic
Latvia v Kazakhstan
Turkey v Iceland

Group B
2014
September 9
Andorra v Wales
Bosnia-Herzegovina v Cyprus
Israel v Belgium
October 10
Belgium v Andorra
Cyprus v Israel
Wales v Bosnia-Herzegovina
October 13
Andorra v Israel
Bosnia-Herzegovina v Belgium
Wales v Cyprus
November 16
Belgium v Wales
Cyprus v Andorra
Israel v Bosnia-Herzegovina
2015
March 28
Andorra v Bosnia-Herzegovina
Belgium v Cyprus
Israel v Wales
June 12
Andorra v Cyprus
Bosnia-Herzegovina v Israel
Wales v Belgium
September 3
Belgium v Bosnia-Herzegovina
Cyprus v Wales
Israel v Andorra
September 6
Bosnia-Herzegovina v Andorra
Cyprus v Belgium
Wales v Israel
October 10
Andorra v Belgium
Bosnia-Herzegovina v Wales
Israel v Cyprus
October 13
Belgium v Israel
Cyprus v Bosnia-Herzegovina
Wales v Andorra

Group C
2014
September 8
Luxembourg v Belarus
Spain v Macedonia
Ukraine v Slovakia
October 9
Belarus v Ukraine
Macedonia v Luxembourg
Slovakia v Spain
October 12
Belarus v Slovakia
Luxembourg v Spain
Ukraine v Macedonia
November 15
Luxembourg v Ukraine
Macedonia v Slovakia
Spain v Belarus
2015
March 27
Macedonia v Belarus
Slovakia v Luxembourg
Spain v Ukraine
June 14
Belarus v Spain
Slovakia v Macedonia
Ukraine v Luxembourg
September 5
Luxembourg v Macedonia
Spain v Slovakia
Ukraine v Belarus
September 8
Belarus v Luxembourg
Macedonia v Spain
Slovakia v Ukraine
October 9
Macedonia v Ukraine
Slovakia v Belarus
Spain v Luxembourg
October 12
Belarus v Macedonia
Luxembourg v Slovakia
Ukraine v Spain

Group D
2014
September 7
Georgia v Republic of Ireland
Germany v Scotland
Gibraltar v Poland
October 11
Poland v Germany
Republic of Ireland v Gibraltar
Scotland v Georgia

More silverware...Germany won the Euro Under-19 title

champions in 2008.

Although he failed to find the net in the Final, Werder Bremen's Davie Selke was on target in all of Germany's other games and finished as the finals' top scorer with six – equalling the record set by Spain's Alvaro Morata in 2011.

The two finalists will now go on to play in next year's Under-20 World Cup in New Zealand, along with Austria, Hungary, Serbia, and Ukraine.

NIGERIA

Suspension lifted

FIFA have lifted the suspension imposed on the Nigeria Football Federation for government interference after the president, executive committee and congress were reinstated.

SIERRA LEONE

Match-fixing bans

Four players – goalkeeper Christian Caulker, midfielders Samuel Barlay and Ibrahim Kargbo, and defender Ibrahim Koroma – have been suspended indefinitely, along with 11 officials, over allegations of match fixing relating to an African Nations Cup qualifier against South Africa in 2008.

October 14
Germany v Republic of Ireland
Gibraltar v Georgia
Poland v Scotland
November 14
Georgia v Poland
Germany v Gibraltar
Scotland v Republic of Ireland
2015
March 29
Georgia v Germany
Republic of Ireland v Poland
Scotland v Gibraltar
June 13
Gibraltar v Germany
Poland v Georgia
Republic of Ireland v Scotland
September 4
Georgia v Scotland
Germany v Poland
Gibraltar v Republic of Ireland
September 7
Poland v Gibraltar
Republic of Ireland v Georgia
Scotland v Germany
October 8
Georgia v Gibraltar
Republic of Ireland v Germany
Scotland v Poland
October 11
Germany v Georgia
Gibraltar v Scotland
Poland v Republic of Ireland

Group E
2014
September 8
Estonia v Slovenia
San Marino v Lithuania
Switzerland v England
October 9
England v San Marino
Lithuania v Estonia
Slovenia v Switzerland
October 12
Estonia v England
Lithuania v Slovenia
October 14
San Marino v Switzerland
November 15
England v Slovenia
San Marino v Estonia
Switzerland v Lithuania
2015
March 27
England v Lithuania
Slovenia v San Marino
Switzerland v Estonia
June 14
Estonia v San Marino
Lithuania v Switzerland
Slovenia v England
September 5
Estonia v Lithuania
San Marino v England
Switzerland v Slovenia
September 8
England v Switzerland
Lithuania v San Marino
Slovenia v Estonia
October 9
England v Estonia
Slovenia v Lithuania
Switzerland v San Marino
October 12
Estonia v Switzerland
Lithuania v England
San Marino v Slovenia

Group F
2014
September 7
Faroe Islands v Finland
Greece v Romania
Hungary v Northern Ireland
October 11
Finland v Greece
Northern Ireland v Faroe Islands
Romania v Hungary
October 14
Faroe Islands v Hungary
Finland v Romania
Greece v Northern Ireland
November 14
Greece v Faroe Islands
Hungary v Finland
Romania v Northern Ireland
2015
March 29
Hungary v Greece
Northern Ireland v Finland
Romania v Faroe Islands
June 13
Faroe Islands v Greece
Finland v Hungary
Northern Ireland v Romania
September 4
Faroe Islands v Northern Ireland
Greece v Finland
Hungary v Romania
September 7
Finland v Faroe Islands
Northern Ireland v Hungary
Romania v Greece
October 8
Hungary v Faroe Islands
Northern Ireland v Greece
Romania v Finland
October 11
Faroe Islands v Romania
Finland v Northern Ireland
Greece v Hungary

Group G
2014
September 8
Austria v Sweden
Montenegro v Moldova
Russia v Liechtenstein
October 9
Liechtenstein v Montenegro
Moldova v Austria
Sweden v Russia
October 12
Austria v Montenegro
Russia v Moldova
Sweden v Liechtenstein
November 15
Austria v Russia
Moldova v Liechtenstein
Montenegro v Sweden
2015
March 27
Liechtenstein v Austria
Moldova v Sweden
Montenegro v Russia
June 14
Liechtenstein v Moldova
Russia v Austria
Sweden v Montenegro
September 5
Austria v Moldova
Montenegro v Liechtenstein
Russia v Sweden
September 8
Liechtenstein v Russia
Moldova v Montenegro
Sweden v Austria
October 9
Liechtenstein v Sweden
Moldova v Russia
Montenegro v Austria
October 12
Austria v Liechtenstein
Russia v Montenegro
Sweden v Moldova

Group H
2014
September 9
Azerbaijan v Bulgaria
Croatia v Malta
Norway v Italy
October 10
Bulgaria v Croatia
Italy v Azerbaijan
Malta v Norway
October 13
Croatia v Azerbaijan
Malta v Italy
Norway v Bulgaria
November 16
Azerbaijan v Norway
Bulgaria v Malta
Italy v Croatia
2015
March 28
Azerbaijan v Malta
Bulgaria v Italy
Croatia v Norway
June 12
Croatia v Italy
Malta v Bulgaria
Norway v Azerbaijan
September 3
Azerbaijan v Croatia
Bulgaria v Norway
Italy v Malta
September 6
Italy v Bulgaria
Malta v Azerbaijan
Norway v Croatia
October 10
Azerbaijan v Italy
Croatia v Bulgaria
Norway v Malta
October 13
Bulgaria v Azerbaijan
Italy v Norway
Malta v Croatia

Group I
2014
September 7
Denmark v Armenia
Portugal v Albania
October 11
Albania v Denmark
Armenia v Serbia
October 14
Denmark v Portugal
Serbia v Albania
November 14
Portugal v Armenia
Serbia v Denmark
2015
March 29
Albania v Armenia
Portugal v Serbia
June 13
Armenia v Portugal
Denmark v Serbia
September 4
Denmark v Albania
Serbia v Armenia
September 7
Albania v Portugal
Armenia v Denmark
October 8
Albania v Serbia
Portugal v Denmark
October 11
Armenia v Albania
Serbia v Portugal

Top 2 in each group and the 3rd-placed team with the best record[1] will qualify directly for the finals; the other 3rd-placed teams will be paired in 4 head-to-head, 2-leg ties, the winners of which will also qualify for the 24-team finals. Hosts France qualify automatically
[1]Determined by results against the teams finishing 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th in the respective groups

2015 ASIAN CUP FINALS

In Australia

Match schedule

Group A

Jan 9	Australia v Kuwait (Melbourne)
Jan 10	South Korea v Oman (Canberra)
Jan 13	Kuwait v South Korea (Canberra)
	Oman v Australia (Sydney)
Jan 17	Australia v South Korea (Brisbane)
	Oman v Kuwait (Newcastle)

Group B

Jan 10	Uzbekistan v North Korea (Sydney)
	Saudi Arabia v China (Brisbane)
Jan 14	North Korea v Saudi Arabia (Melbourne)
	China v Uzbekistan (Brisbane)
Jan 18	Uzbekistan v Saudi Arabia (Melbourne)
	China v North Korea (Canberra)

Group C

Jan 11	UAE v Qatar (Canberra)
	Iran v Bahrain (Melbourne)
Jan 15	Bahrain v UAE (Canberra)
	Qatar v Iran (Sydney)
Jan 19	Iran v UAE (Brisbane)
	Qatar v Bahrain (Sydney)

Group D

Jan 12	Japan v Palestine (Newcastle)
	Jordan v Iraq (Brisbane)
Jan 16	Palestine v Jordan (Melbourne)
	Iraq v Japan (Brisbane)
Jan 20	Japan v Jordan (Melbourne)
	Iraq v Palestine (Canberra)

Top 2 in each group qualify for quarter-finals

Quarter-finals

Jan 22	Gp A 1st v Gp B 2nd (Melbourne) (QF1)
	Gp B 1st v Gp A 2nd (Brisbane) (QF2)
Jan 23	Gp C 1st v Gp D 2nd (Canberra) (QF3)
	Gp D 1st v Gp C 2nd (Sydney) (QF4)

Semi-finals

Jan 26	QF1 winners v QF3 winners (Sydney)
Jan 27	QF2 winners v QF4 winners (Newcastle)

3rd-place match

Jan 30	(Newcastle)

Final

Jan 31	(Sydney)

KEY TO TABLES
(Q) = qualified for next stage

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: PREMIJER LIGA

Another season of struggle looms

Although the national team made history this summer with their first appearance at a World Cup finals, the Bosnian league continues to lack popular support and clubs struggle to make ends meet.

In a country that is one of Europe's poorest, stability and order are words rarely associated with the domestic game. Despite winning the league last time out, Zrinjski Mostar's Croatian coach Branko Karacic brought in 10 new players during pre-season but still failed to bridge the quality gap with the rest of the continent, with their Champions League run ending at the first qualifying hurdle, against Maribor of Slovenia.

One of the few clubs without money worries is Sarajevo, who are funded by Cardiff City owner Vincent Tan. Once a powerhouse in Bosnian football, Sarajevo are using the Malaysian's financial backing to develop a youth academy – which is now one of the best in the region – as well as strengthening the first team. The club is now seeking its first title since 2007 and coach Dzenan Uscuplic is under pressure to deliver.

KEY DATES

SEASON STARTED AUGUST 2, 2014

SEASON ENDS MAY 2015

After years of domination, Sarajevo's city rivals Zeljeznicar ended last season trophyless. Dino Dzurbuzovic replaced Amar Osim as coach last summer but he failed to replicate Osim's success and the team is now in the hands of Admir Adzem. While Zeljeznicar are not expected to mount a serious challenge this term, Siroki Brijeg could be contenders. Twice winners – the last time in 2006 – coach Slaven Musa has added a couple of new players to an already solid squad.

Although still focused on financial stabilisation, Velez Mostar's run of seven consecutive wins at the end of last season suggests that they could be a surprise package.

The biggest worry is for Zvijezda Gradacac, who could be kicked out of the league after their opening came of the season was cancelled due to outstanding debts.

Sasa Ibrulj

Making his presence felt...Cardiff City owner Tan has invested in Sarajevo, who are developing their youth academy to help restore former glories

CROATIA: PRVA HNL

Dinamo set for number 10

In the summer of 2005, Dinamo Zagreb's executive president Zdravko Mamic – the most powerful man in Croatian football – claimed his side would win the league for 10 years in a row. With last term providing the club with title number nine, it seems little can stop that prophesy becoming reality next year.

Mamic's next target is success in Europe and his latest claim is that Dinamo will qualify for the group stage of the Champions League at least eight times in the next 10 years.

The club invested in seven new foreign players during pre-season as they continued empire building.

The only side who have managed to get the better of Dinamo are Rijeka, who repeated last season's Cup Final victory over the champions by winning the Croatian Super Cup 2-1 in July with goals from Miral Samardzic and Moises. Rijeka's Italian owner Gabriele Volpi appears to have seen off the challenge from Hajduk Split, who have been struggling to avoid bankruptcy for several years.

Two Croatian Cups in nine years is not good enough for the country's best supported team, but Hajduk have been hamstrung by having to sell off their best young players. It was business as usual again this summer as 18-year-old Mario Pasalic left for Chelsea.

Ivan Reic

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED JULY 25, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY 29, 2015

HUNGARY: NB I

Grounds for optimism

With new stadiums opening across the country, the 2014-15 season is set to be the most positive for the domestic game in decades.

Ferencvaros, defending champions Debrecen and even Puskas Akademia in Felcsut have new grounds, and there are also new arenas on the cards in Szombathely and Miskolc, home to Haladas and Diosgyor. In Budapest, the national Ferenc Puskas Stadium and Honved's Jozsef Bozsik Stadium, both named after the main stars of the famous Hungary side from the 1950s, should have major overhauls by 2016.

For a league with an average attendance of fewer than 5,000 this massive investment represents a huge risk on the part of the government. Football-mad prime minister Viktor Orban, from the village of Felcsut, has been behind the decision making in many cases.

Hungary's most popular club, Ferencvaros opened the 24,000-capacity Groupama Arena with a friendly against Chelsea in August and are welcoming back Zoltan Gera after 10 years in England. The veteran attacking midfielder had just finished celebrating the title win of 2004 – Fradi's last to date – when he joined West Bromwich Albion. With ex-Germany international Thomas Doll in charge, Ferencvaros now aim to put together their most realistic title challenge since then.

Last season's champions Debrecen have retained the services of coach Elemer Kondas and brought in right-sided midfielder Jozsef Varga from Middlesbrough and Vukasin Poleksic, the Montenegrin keeper who was disgraced in the match-fixing scandal during the club's only appearance in the Champions League group stage, in 2009.

Gyor, champions in 2013, lost out on goal difference to Debrecen in May and have signed midfielder Andras Stieber, formerly of Aston Villa. Ex-Watford and Ipswich striker Tamas Priskin returns to the club where he started as a teenager, and in Ferenc Horvath they have Hungary's brightest young coach.

Of the other challengers, Videoton have dipped into partner club Puskas Akademia's squad, while Honved will be hoping former Sampdoria star Pietro Vierchowod enjoys a successful stint at coaching after failures in Italy a decade ago.

In Budapest, Ujpest, under coach Nebojsa Vignjevic, can count on Albanian attacking midfielder Ahmeti Berat, their main summer arrival, from Pristina. The 2014 Hungarian Cup winners won't be competing in Europe, however, as their place was handed to Diosgyor due to financial irregularities. MTK will be hoping to improve on a poor last term and the return of striker Adam Hrepka from Haladas will help.

Newcomers Nyiregyhaza will bring their significant fan base to the top flight, while Dunaujvaros make a welcome return after winning the title as defunct Dunaferr in 2000.

Peterjon Cresswell

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED JULY 27, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY 29, 2015

ISRAEL: PREMIER LEAGUE

Garcia back in charge

After just one season away, with English second-tier side Brighton & Hove Albion, Oscar Garcia is back in the hot seat at Maccabi Tel Aviv with the task of leading the club to a third successive league title. Only Maccabi Haifa (2004-2006) have managed that feat in the past 50 years, since Hapoel Petah Tikva's run of five consecutive championships from 1959 to 1963.

Garcia, handed a two-year deal, led Maccabi to the 2013 title with 10 points to spare. However, his successor Paulo Sousa, who has now moved on to Basle, had an even more impressive debut campaign as the team finished 16 points clear of Hapoel Beer Sheva last term.

The Spaniard has bolstered the squad with the signing of striker Eden Ben Basat from Toulouse and his Israeli national team-mate Yuval Spungin from Belgium's Mons, But of more importance will be Garcia's ability to hang on to captain Sheran Yeini and star midfielder Eran Zahavi.

Among the other summer coaching changes were Ran Ben Shimon, who was sacked by Hapoel Tel Aviv in May, taking over at Maccabi Petah Tikva and Guy Levy being named boss of Bnei Sakhnin.

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTS AUGUST 22, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY 2015

MONTENEGRO: FIRST LEAGUE

Late withdrawal causes problems

The start of the new season was thrown into chaos just 10 days before the big kick-off when Celik Niksic informed the Montenegrin FA that they were pulling out of the First League after failing to come up the €400,000 they needed for the season. The FA ruled that Mornar Bar, who were relegated last term after losing to Berane in the play-offs, would replace them.

Celik joined the top flight club in 2011, won the Cup last year and had three consecutive seasons in the Europa League. However, after their main financier, Ranko Radulovic, decided to pull out, the club were forced to withdraw and they will start again in the third tier.

The participation of Mogren was also in doubt as the former champions are under suspension because of money owed to former players, coaches and employees. However, such a situation seems almost an annual occurrence for the club from Budva, so it was anticipated that they would eventually be granted a license.

Under such circumstances there is no clear favourite for this term's league title.

Sutjeska Niksic, who have won the championship for the past two seasons, will fancy their chances once again, as will Buducnost Podgorica and Lovcen Cetinje, with Zeta Golubovci and Mladost Podgorica also capable of mounting a challenge. Sutjeska have been boosted by the arrival of left-sided national-team midfielder Blazo Igumanovic from Rudar Pljevlja, who is widely considered to be one of the best players in the domestic league.

However, coach Dragan Radojicic, who guided the team to successive league titles, has left to take charge of Buducnost.

The capital club have also brought back Brazilian attacking midfielder Flavio Beck Junior from Inter Baku and signed defender Nikola Celebic from Petrovac. City rivals Zeta, from the Podgorica suburb of Golubovci, signed three experienced players in defender Blazo Rajovic from Vllaznia of Albania, Mladost central midfielder Goran Burzanovic and forward Petar Orlandic from Hapoel Tel Aviv.

Lovcen were the biggest surprise of last season, finishing league runners-up and cup winners, and they have retained the core of their side. Mladost revamped their line-up with the signing of keeper Mileta Radulovic from Grbalj, former Montenegro left-back Luka Pejovic from Jagiellonia Bialystok, and midfielder Miroje Jovanovic and Ruder striker Bogdan Milic

Vladimir Novak & Dejan Panic

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED AUGUST 8, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY 2015

NORTHERN IRELAND: NIFL PREMIERSHIP

Hat-trick may prove tricky

Vital...midfielder Catney will be a key figure in Cliftonville's title defence

Cliftonville, champions for the past two seasons, face the daunting task of winning a hat-trick of titles – something only the long-defunct Belfast Celtic and Linfield have managed in the league's 122-year history.

And the Reds will have to manage it without Liam Boyce, who has joined Ross County in Scotland, and Diarmuid O'Carroll, who has moved to Crusaders. Manager Tommy Breslin has brought in James Knowles from Linfield to strengthen the midfield alongside Chris Curran, Barry Johnston and Ryan Catney, and that quartet, together with goalkeeper Colin Devlin, could be the vital factor.

With David Jeffrey stepping down after 17 years in charge at Linfield, the pressure is on Warren Feeney to restore the Belfast club lost lustre.

Making his managerial debut in what is the most demanding football job in the province, 46-times capped former striker Feeney has certainly not flinched from radical changes as he looks to restore the Blues to top spot.

New signing Sammy Morrow (Ross County) should provided power up front, while other newcomers include defender Chris Hegarty (Rangers) and midfielder Stephen Lowry (Coleraine).

Ronnie McFall, the longest-serving manager in top-flight European football, is now in his 28th year with Portadown, and with the canny addition of former Linfield trio Mark McAllister, Michael Gault and Robert Garrett, his side could well better last season's fourth place.

Leaving the "Ports" is 31-year-old striker Kevin Braniff who joins rivals Glenavon.

Cash problems continue to plague once mighty Glentoran, whose manager Eddie Patterson will be looking to consolidate with basically the same squad as last season.

At the bottom, Dungannon Swifts and Warrenpoint Town will be looking to finish above Ballinamallard United and newly promoted Institute from Londonderry.

Roy Kitson

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED AUGUST 9, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY 2015

ROMANIA: LIGA 1

Galca takes Steaua challenge

Defending champions Steaua Bucharest will again be the team to beat, despite losing a number of key figures in the summer. Laurentiu Reghecampf stepped down as coach and he has been replaced by the club's former midfielder Constantin Galca.

Reghecampf moved to Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal, where he was joined by captain Mihai Pintilii. National goalkeeper Ciprian Tatarusanu left for Fiorentina, while last season's top scorer Federico Piovaccari has returned to Sampdoria. Steaua's finances have been restricted with owner Gica Becali in prison, but the champions did sign forward Valentin Lemnaru from Universitatea Cluj.

Steaua lost the Super Cup on penalties to Cup-winners Astra, who could be their biggest challengers after finishing runners-up for the first time last season. Astra are owned by Romania's richest man, Ioan Nicolae. They welcomed back Nigerian-born striker Kehinde Fatai from a loan spell at Club Brugge. Fatai could be persuaded to take Romanian citizenship in order to play for the national side.

Petrolul, third last season and coached by Mircea Lucescu's son Razvan, will also be expected to challenge but much will depend on the form and fitness of veteran striker Adrian Mutu.

Back...Mutu, pictured playing for AC Ajaccio in France, returned to Romania in January

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED JULY 28, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY 28, 2015

Dinamo may struggle to repeat last season's fourth place after releasing captain Laurentiu Rus and their keeper, Cristian Balgradean.

Rapid Bucharest are back in the top flight a year after being relegated following financial difficulties. Coach Viorel Moldovan has left to take charge of Romania's under-21 side and is replaced by another former international, Ional Ganea.

Gheorghe Hagi's Viitorul Constanta could be worth a look, especially if Hagi's 15-year-old son Ianis is given a debut.

Romanian football continues to be troubled by allegations of corruption. After the trial that led to the jailing of Gica Popescu, this summer saw the arrest of club owners Dan Adamescu (Otelul) and Gheorghe Stefan (Ceahlaul).

Emanuel Rosu

SERBIA: SUPER LIGA

A levelling of the playing field

For much of last season, public opinion was divided over whether an evenly balanced Super Liga was due to the fact that the big two Belgrade clubs, Partizan and Red Star, had became weaker, or the rest of the top flight had improved. As the new campaign gets under way, it seems it is the former rather than the latter.

Red Star's joy at ending their six-year title drought was dampened when UEFA suspended the club from European competition for a year due to breaches of rules over licensing and financial fair play.

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED AUGUST 9, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY 30, 2015

Although the verdict was unexpected, it was still a big setback and brought about the resignation of president Dragan Dzajic and coach Slavisa Stojanovic. Several key players from last year's championship also left, including Abiola Dauda and Dragan Mrda.

Until a new president is elected in December, Zvezdan Terzic – the former OFK Belgrade chairman and ex-president of the Serbian FA, who in early 2008 was charged for embezzlement and fraud in connection with transfers of OFK Belgrade players, and who was on the run until the end of 2010 – will be acting chief executive.

> "If we lose the title, I will return all my year's salary"
> Promise made by Milos Ninkovic on arriving at Red Star last summer

Even with no money for spectacular new signings, Red Star should be good enough to challenge for the league title again. Goalkeeper Predrag Rajkovic, central defender Vukasin Jovanovic, who are both 18, and 16-year-old striker Luka Jovic could all be given their chance.

Partizan, who took Red Star's slot in the Champions League qualifiers, are also in dire financial straits. The signing of a quality striker would see them as favourites for the title, but such an investment seems unlikely, while they may struggle to hang on to teenage talents Andrija Zivkovic and Danilo Pantic.

Vojvodina, who won the Serbian Cup last term in their centenary, are also beset by money woes which could see them slip to mid table, allowing smaller, better off clubs such as Jagodina and Cukaricki Belgrade fight for the Europa League places.

One of the summer's most interesting transfers was the arrival of former USA prodigy Freddy Adu who joined Jagodina.

Vladimir Novak

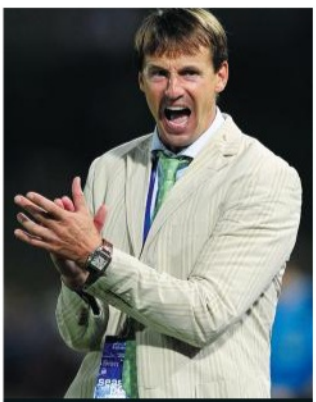
SLOVAKIA: SUPER LIGA

More silverware for Slovan

Challengers...Spartak Trnava's Jan Vlasko (stripes) tussles with Jiri Kladrubsky of champions Slovan Bratislava

Defending champions Slovan Bratislava replaced title-winning coach Dusan Galis with former Czech Republic defender Frantisek Straka during the summer, but it remains business as usual for the country's most successful club.

A goal from Serb striker Marko Milinkovic saw Slovan claim their first silverware of the season in early July, avenging last season's


New Slovan boss...Straka

SLOVENIA: PRVA LIGA

Maribor build towards five in a row

Maribor continue to go from strength to strength domestically, and few would bet against coach Ante Simundza leading the club to their fifth successive league title.

They were helped on their way to a 12th Slovene championship last season by the arrival of two national team players, centre-back Marko Suler and midfielder Dare Vrsic, midway through the campaign.

Simundza has been just as pro-active during the summer, bringing in Senegalese forward Welle N'Diaye from Gorica and Ethiopian-born Israeli winger Sintayehu Sallallich from Maccabi Haifa.

An already huge squad, which still contains the club's all-time record goalscorer Marco Tavares, is further completed by the addition of homegrown talent such as 19-year-old defender Ziga Zivko.

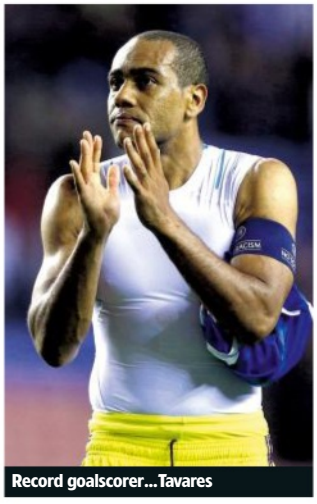
Last season's poor showing by traditional rivals Olimpija Ljubljana saw Koper and Rudar push Maribor hardest, and they will both hope to do so again this time around. The arrival of ex-international midfielder Darijan Matic will boost Olimpija's chances.

Rarely out of the top five since Slovenia gained independence, cup holders Gorica are a colourful prospect under former Parma defender Luigi Apolloni. Although young midfielder Francesco Finocchio, who scored both goals in the Final victory over Maribor, has returned to Italy, Apolloni have uncovered an exciting prospect in 20-year-old striker Irdi Rapaj from recently promoted Apolonia Fier in his native Albania. Teenage Nigerian striker Bede Amarachi Osuji, returning from a loan spell at lower-league Brda, will benefit from the experience of his compatriot Stephen Makinwa, a former Nigerian international who played for Genoa, Atalanta, Palermo and Lazio, and was in China with Beijing Baxy last term.

Little was expected of village team Zavrc when they made the top flight last year. Winners of every league they had played in, from the sixth flight to the second, from 2009 onwards, they more than held their own last season.

Set right by the border, Zavrc have brought in more Croats for the new campaign, including goalkeeper Ante Mrmic, defender

> "The quality of NK Maribor lies not only with the players but also in the club structure, management, fans and people who live for the club" Maribor coach Ante Simundza


Record goalscorer...Tavares

KEY DATES

SEASON STARTED JULY 18, 2014

SEASON ENDS MAY 29, 2015

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTED JULY 11, 2014
SEASON ENDS MAY 30, 2015

Super Cup defeat with a 1-0 victory over cup winners Kosice.

Milinkovic has remained with Slovan, along with skipper Igor Zofcak, and they are joined by midfielder Tomas Jablonsky who arrives from Jablonec.

Although Spartak Trnava are yet to win a Slovak title since independence in 1993, the club are most definitely on the up. Currently rebuilding their stadium – named after Anton Malatinsky, who was coach during Trnava's golden era 40 years ago – the signing of Spanish midfielder Jose Casado, who was on Barcelona's books as a teenager, should add flair to a side that also features promising 17-year-old winger Nikolas Spalek.

Other interesting summer moves include the return of one-time international striker Frantisek Kubik to last year's runners-up Trencin from Ergotelis of Greece, 21-year-old winger Boris Turcak joining Ruzomberok from Slovan Bratislava and Ajdin Redzic, signed by Kosice from Triglav Kranj of Slovenia.

There are new coaches at Spartak Myjava (Peter Gergely) and Ruzomberok (Ladislav Simco), while promoted Sport Podbrezova from central Slovakia prepare for their first-ever season in the top flight under the guidance former centre-back Jaroslav Kentos.

Peterjon Cresswell

> "We are still not yet a top-ranking European team producing winning performances for the whole year"
>
> Slovan Bratislava midfielder Juraj Halenar

International...Matic has joined Olimpija Ljubljana from Kryvbas Kryvyi Rih of Ukraine

Matija Kristic and forward Ivan Antolek.

An even smaller club, Dob, whose home ground has a capacity of just 400, lacked the resources to claim their rightful place in the top flight after winning the second tier, so runners-up Radomlje will make their Prva Liga debut.

Peterjon Cresswell

Pitch perfect...Prestatyn Town have the potential to be in the title mix

WALES: PREMIER LEAGUE

More clubs look to new surface

There will be new 3G synthetic pitches in the Welsh top tier this season at Airbus UK Broughton and Newtown, with Aberystwyth Town following suit when their major stadium rebuild begins in October, and Carmarthen Town and Prestatyn Town also considering a conversion.

The New Saints, who have played their home games on an artificial surface for years, will be favourites for the title once again, with a challenge expected from Airbus, Bangor and Aberystwyth. All four clubs exited Europe at the first qualifying hurdle, although TNS put up a brave performance against Slovan Bratislava of Slovakia before going down 3-0 on aggregate in the Champions League.

Carmarthen, Gap Connah's Quay, Bala Town and Rhyl all strengthened ahead of the campaign and should be contenders for a top-six finish at the end of Phase 1. If Prestatyn and Port Talbot Town live up to their potential it could prove to be a very competitive run-up to the split in January.

Cefn Druids have only one squad member left from last season's promotion-winning side, with the club's new manager John Keegan opting to bring in more experienced players in order to help establish Wales' oldest club back in the top flight.

Mel Thomas

> "The 3G project is about the club and the community"
>
> Carmarthen Town manager Mark Aizlewood

KEY DATES
SEASON STARTS AUGUST 22, 2014
SEASON ENDS APRIL 2015

• *For all this season's league fixtures in Europe, go to www.worldsoccer.com/world-service*

ANDORRA

Keeper's late drama

FC Santa Coloma goalkeeper Eloy Casals scored a dramatic 94th-minute equaliser as his side beat Armenian champions Banants on away goals to progress in European competition for the first time in the club's history.

The 31-year-old scored after going upfield for a free-kick with his side trailing 3-2 on aggregate in the Champions League first qualifying round – only the second time an Andorran side has got past that stage.

The Andorran title holders were, however, beaten in the next round of the competition, going down 3-0 on aggregate to Maccabi Tel Aviv of Israel.

Win...FC Santa Coloma (in white)

ESTONIA

Just short of record

Tallinn's Roman Smishko fell 108 minutes short of beating former Club Brugge goalkeeper Dany Verlinden's record of 1,390 minutes without conceding a goal in a top-flight European league. The 31-year-old had already set a new domestic record, but his run of 13 clean sheets came to an end with his side's 3-2 home defeat by Infonet.

During his unbeaten spell Smishko also kept two clean sheets, against La Fiorita of San Marino, in the Champions League first qualifying round – although he did concede seven times 10 days prior to the defeat by Infonet as Levadia were thrashed 7-0 by Sparta Prague in the next round of continental competition.

Club Results

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st qualifying round

1st legs - July 1/2; 2nd legs - July 8/9

FC Santa Coloma (And) v Banants (Arm) 1-0, 2-3 (agg 3-3, FC Santa Coloma on away goals)
La Fiorita (SaM) v Levadia Tallinn (Est) 0-1, 0-7 (agg 0-8)
Lincoln (Gib) v HB (Far) 1-1, 2-5 (agg 3-6)

2nd qualifying round

1st legs - July 15/16; 2nd legs - July 22/23
(clubs with country abbreviation entered at this stage)

BATE Borisov (Bls) v Skenderbeu (Alb) 0-0, 1-1 (agg 1-1, BATE on away goals)
Cliftonville (Nlr) v Debrecen (Hun) 0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2)
Dinamo Tbilisi (Geo) v Aktobe (Kaz) 0-1, 0-3 (agg 0-4)
Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) v Zalgiris (Lit) 2-0, 2-0 (agg 4-0)
FC Santa Coloma v Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) 0-1, 0-2 (agg 0-3)
KR (Ice) v Celtic (Sco) 0-1, 0-4 (agg 0-5)
Legia Warsaw (Pol) v St Patrick's (Rol) 1-1, 5-0 (agg 6-1)
Ludogorets (Bul) v Dudelange (Lux) 4-0, 1-1 (agg 5-1)
Malmo (Swe) v Ventspils (Lat) 0-0, 1-0 (agg 1-0)
Partizan Belgrade (Ser) v HB 3-0, 3-1 (agg 6-1)
Rabotnicki (Mac) v HJK (Fin) 0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2)
Sheriff (Mol) v Sutjeska (Mne) 2-0, 3-0 (agg 5-0)
Slovan Bratislava (Slk) v The New Saints (Wal) 1-0, 2-0 (agg 3-0)
Sparta Prague (CzR) v Levadia Tallinn 7-0, 1-1 (agg 8-1)
Stromsgodset (Nor) v Steaua Bucharest (Rom) 0-1, 0-2 (agg 0-3)
Valletta (Mlt) v Qarabag (Aze) 0-1, 0-4 (agg 0-5)
Zrinjski (Bos) v Maribor (Sln) 0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2)

EUROPA LEAGUE

1st qualifying round

1st legs - July 1-3; 2nd legs - July 8-11

Aberdeen (Sco) v Daugava Riga (Lat) 5-0, 3-0 (agg 8-0)
B36 (Far) v Linfield (Nlr) 1-2, 1-1 (agg 2-3)
Banga (Lit) v Sligo (Rol) 0-0, 0-4 (agg 0-4)
Botev Plovdiv (Bul) v Libertas (SaM) 4-0, 2-0 (agg 6-0)
Broughton (Wal) v Haugesund (Nor) 1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3)
Celik (Mne) v Koper (Sln) 0-5, 0-4 (agg 0-9)
Crusaders (Nlr) v Ekranas (Lit) 3-1, 2-1 (agg 5-2)
Cukaricki (Ser) v Sant Julia (And) 4-0, 0-0 (agg 4-0)
Derry (Nlr) v Aberystwyth (Wal) 4-0, 5-0 (agg 9-0)
Differdange (Lux) v Atlantas (Lit) 1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3)
Diosgyor (Hun) v Birkirkara (Mlt) 2-1, 4-1 (agg 6-2)
FH (Ice) v Glenavon (Nlr) 3-0, 3-2 (agg 6-2)
Folgore/Falciano (SaM) v Buducnost (Mne) 1-2, 0-3 (agg 1-5)
Fram (Ice) v Kalju (Est) 0-1, 2-2 (agg 2-3)
Hibernians (Mlt) v Spartak Trnava (Slk) 2-4, 0-5 (agg 2-9)
IFK Gothenburg (Swe) v Fola (Lux) 0-0, 2-0 (agg 2-0)
Jeunesse Esch (Lux) v Dundalk (Rol) 0-2, 1-3 (agg 1-5)
Kairat (Kaz) v Kukes (Alb) 1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0)
MyPa (Fin) v IF (Far) 1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0)
Pyunik (Arm) v Astana (Kaz) 1-4, 0-2 (agg 1-6)
Qabala (Aze) v Siroki Brijeg (Bos) 0-2, 0-3 (agg 0-5)
Rosenborg (Nor) v Jelgava (Lat) 4-0, 2-0 (agg 6-0)
Rudar Velenje (Sln) v Lac (Alb) 1-1, 1-1 (aet) (agg 2-2, Lac 3-2 on pens)
Santos (Est) v Tromso (Nor) 0-7, 1-6 (agg 1-13)
Shirak (Arm) v Shakhter (Kaz) 1-2, 1-3 (agg 2-5)
Shkendija (Mac) v Zimbru (Mol) 2-1, 0-2 (agg 2-3)
Sillamae (Est) v Honka (Fin) 2-1, 2-3 (agg 4-4, Sillamae on away goals)
Sioni (Geo) v Flamurtari (Alb) 2-3, 2-1 (agg 4-4, Flamurtari on away goals)
Sliema (Mlt) v Ferencvaros (Hun) 1-1, 1-2 (agg 2-3)
Split (Cro) v Mika (Arm) 2-0, 1-1 (agg 3-1)
Stjarnan (Ice) v Bangor (Wal) 4-0, 4-0 (agg 8-0)
Tiraspol (Mol) v Inter Baku (Aze) 2-3, 1-3 (agg 3-6)
Turnovo (Mac) v Chikhura (Geo) 0-1, 1-3 (agg 1-4)
UE Santa Coloma (And) v Metalurg Skopje (Mac) 0-3, 0-2 (agg 0-5)
Vaduz (Lie) v College Europa (Gib) 3-0, 1-0 (agg 4-0)
Veris (Mol) v Lovech (Bul) 0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3)
Vikingur (Far) v Daugava Daugavpils (Lat) 2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2)
VPS (Fin) v Brommapojkarna (Swe) 2-1, 0-2 (agg 2-3)
Zeljeznicar (Bos) v Lovcen (Mne) 0-0, 1-0 (agg 1-0)

2nd qualifying round

1st legs - July 17; 2nd legs - July 22-24
(clubs with country abbreviation entered at this stage)

Aberdeen v Groningen (Hol) 0-0, 2-1 (agg 2-1)
Astana v Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr) 3-0, 0-1 (agg 3-1)
Atlantas v Shakhter 0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3)
Botev Plovdiv v St Polten (Aut) 2-1, 0-2 (agg 2-3)
Brommapojkarna v Crusaders 4-0, 1-1 (agg 5-1)
Buducnost v Omonia (Cyp) 0-2, 0-0 (agg 0-2)
Bursaspor (Tur) v Chikhura 0-0, 0-0 (aet) (agg 0-0, Chikhura 4-1 on pens)
CFR Cluj (Rom) v Jagodina (Ser) 0-0, 1-0 (agg 1-0)
CSKA Sofia (Bul) v Zimbru 1-1, 0-0 (agg 1-1, Zimbru on away goals)
Cukaricki v Grodig (Aut) 0-4, 2-1 (agg 2-5)
Derry v Shakhtyor (Bls) 0-1, 1-5 (agg 1-6)
Dinamo Minsk (Bls) v MyPa 3-0, 0-0 (agg 3-0)
Dundalk v Hajduk Split (Cro) 0-2, 2-1 (agg 2-3)
Elfsborg (Swe) v Inter Baku 0-1, 1-0 (aet) (agg 1-1, Elfsborg 4-3 on pens)
Gyor (Hun) v IFK Gothenburg 0-3, 1-0 (agg 1-3)
Kairat v Esbjerg (Den) 1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)
Kalju v Lech (Pol) 1-0, 0-3 (agg 1-3)
Kosice (Slk) v Liberec (CzR) 0-1, 0-3 (agg 0-4)
Lac v Zorya (Ukr) 0-3, 1-2 (agg 1-5)
Linfield v AIK (Swe) 1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
Lovech v Diosgyor 0-2, 2-1 (agg 2-3)
Lucerne (Swi) v St Johnstone (Sco) 1-1, 1-1 (aet) (agg 2-2, St Johnstone 5-4 on pens)
Metalurg Skopje v Zeljeznicar 0-0, 2-2 (agg 2-2, Metalurg on away goals)
Mlada Boleslav (CzR) v Siroki Brijeg 2-1, 4-0 (agg 6-1)
Molde (Nor) v Gorica (Sln) 4-1, 1-1 (agg 5-2)
Motherwell (Sco) v Stjarnan 2-2, 2-3 (aet) (agg 4-5)
Neftchi (Aze) v Koper 1-2, 2-0 (agg 3-2)
Neman (Bls) v FH 1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3)
Petrolul (Rom) v Flamurtari 2-0, 3-1 (agg 5-1)
Rijeka (Cro) v Ferencvaros 1-0, 2-1 (agg 3-1)
RoPS (Fin) v Asteras (Gre) 1-1, 2-4 (agg 3-5)
Rosenborg v Sligo 1-2, 3-1 (agg 4-3)
Ruch (Pol) v Vaduz 3-2, 0-0 (agg 3-2)
Sarajevo (Bos) v Haugesund 0-1, 3-1 (agg 3-2)
Sillamae v Krasnodar (Rus) 0-4, 0-5 (agg 0-9)
Split v Hapoel Be'er Sheva (Isr) 2-1, 0-0 (agg 2-1)
Trencin (Slk) v Vojvodina (Ser) 4-0, 0-3 (agg 4-3)
Vikingur v Tromso 0-0, 2-1 (agg 2-1)
Zestafoni (Geo) v Spartak Trnava 0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3)
Zulte Waregem (Blg) v Zawisza (Pol) 2-1, 3-1 (agg 5-2)

ALBANIA

ALBANIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Skenderbeu (C)	33	18	7	8	52	32	61
Kukesi	33	16	9	8	46	34	57
Laci	33	16	6	11	41	28	54
Teuta	33	14	12	7	46	35	54
Partizani	33	15	8	10	33	26	53
Tirana	33	14	8	11	36	31	50
Flamurtari[1]	33	14	9	10	45	40	48
Vllaznia	33	12	9	12	42	36	45
Besa[1] (R)	33	11	9	13	34	32	39
Kastrioti (R)	33	8	5	20	26	46	29
Lushnja (R)	33	7	5	21	32	59	26
Bylis (R)	33	5	9	19	20	54	24

[1]3pts deducted

ANDORRA

Division split after 14-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

ANDORRA – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC S Coloma (C)	20	13	3	4	50	12	42
UE S Coloma	20	12	3	5	40	24	39
Sant Julia	20	11	5	4	46	19	38
Lusitans	20	11	2	7	57	20	35

ANDORRA – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ordino	20	9	5	6	41	34	32
Encamp	20	7	4	9	34	53	25
Inter[1]	20	3	2	15	16	55	11
Principat (R)	20	1	2	17	8	75	5

[1]Inter stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off

ARMENIA

ARMENIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Banants (C)	28	14	8	6	38	23	50
Shirak	28	13	8	7	48	31	47
Mika	28	12	11	5	36	27	47
Ararat	28	12	8	8	30	23	44
Gandzasar	28	8	11	9	36	31	35
Pyunik	28	8	8	12	41	39	32
Ulisses[1]	28	7	4	17	21	45	25
Alashkert[1]	28	6	6	16	38	69	24

[1]Ulisses were disbanded after end of season, meaning Alashkert, who would have been relegated, stay in top division

AUSTRIA

July 19: Salzburg 6 Rapid 1; Ried 3 Wiener Neustadt 1; Admira 1 Wolfsberger 4; Altach 1 Sturm 0.
July 20: Austria 1 Grodig 1.
July 26: Wolfsberger 4 Austria 0; Rapid 1 Ried 0; Wiener Neustadt 0 Salzburg 5.
July 27: Grodig 2 Sturm 1.

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Salzburg	2	2	0	0	11	1	6
Wolfsberger	2	2	0	0	8	1	6
Grodig	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Ried	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Altach	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Rapid	2	1	0	1	2	6	3
Austria	2	0	1	1	1	5	1
Sturm	2	0	0	2	1	3	0
Admira	1	0	0	1	1	4	0
W Neustadt	2	0	0	2	1	8	0

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated

AZERBAIJAN

AZERBAIJAN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Qarabag (C)	36	21	9	6	66	21	72
Inter	36	20	7	9	60	37	67
Qabala	36	18	7	11	48	36	61
Neftchi	36	17	9	10	48	42	60
Baku	36	16	9	11	53	43	57
Khazar	36	12	13	11	44	49	49
Simurq	36	11	13	12	35	28	46
AZAL	36	6	13	17	29	49	31
Sumqayit	36	5	10	21	27	61	25
Ravan (R)	36	4	10	22	22	66	22

BELGIUM

Regular season

July 25: Standard 3 Charleroi 0.
July 26: Waasland-Beveren 0 Club Brugge 2; Lierse 2 Oostende 0; Westerlo 1 Lokeren 0; Cercle Brugge 0 Gent 0.
July 27: Mechelen 3 Genk 1; Anderlecht 3 Mouscron Peruwelz 1; Zulte Waregem 2 Kortrijk 0.

BELGIUM – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Standard	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Anderlecht	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Mechelen	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Club Brugge	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Lierse	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Zulte Waregem	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Westerlo	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Cercle Brugge	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Gent	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Lokeren	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Genk	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
Mouscron P	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
Kortrijk	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Oostende	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Waasland-B	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Charleroi	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

30-round regular season (15x2); top 6 will form championship group, 7th to 14th will enter Europa League-place play-offs, 15th & 16th (bottom 2) will enter relegation play-off series (the winners of which will enter rel/prom play-offs, the losers will go down)

FAROE ISLANDS

Walking on water

Vikingur became the first Faroese side to get through two rounds of a continental club competition, beating Daugava Daugavpils of Latvia and Norway's Tromso in the Europa League.

"The players are able to walk on water at the moment," said coach Sigfriour Clementsen.

Opener...Chipolina

GIBRALTAR

Imps make history

Domestic champions for the past 12 seasons, Lincoln Red Imps were beaten 6-3 on aggregate by HB Torshavn as they became the first Gibraltarian club to play in the Champions League. A second-half equaliser from Levi Hanssen had denied Lincoln victory in the first leg of their first qualifying round tie after they had taken the lead against their Faroese visitors through Joseph Chipolina.

SPAIN

Cards wiped out

New rules this season mean there will be no potential repeat of the suspension that saw Real Madrid's Xabi Alonso miss May's Champions League Final against Atletico Madrid.

Bookings accrued during continental competitions will now expire after the quarter-finals. Alonso received three bookings in last term's tournament, the third of which came in the semi-final second leg against Bayern Munich. Under the new ruling, he would have been allowed to play as his previous cautions would have expired.

CYPRUS

Division split after 26-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

CYPRUS – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
APOEL (C)	36	25	6	5	80	25	81
AEL	36	25	6	5	68	29	81
Apollon	36	24	5	7	66	29	77
Ermis	36	18	8	10	55	54	62
Omonia	36	16	11	9	59	37	59
Anorthosis	36	12	6	18	57	64	42

CYPRUS – RELEGATION GROUP[1] – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nea Salamina[2]	36	17	3	16	43	49	51
AEK Larnaca	36	13	11	12	49	36	50
Ethnikos	36	12	8	16	48	45	44
Doxa	36	11	9	16	50	61	42
Aris (R)	36	8	13	15	51	57	37
Kouklion (R)	36	6	5	25	34	94	23

[1]ENP & Alki had already been relegated as the bottom 2 in the regular-season table
[2]3pts deducted for failing to meet financial criteria

CZECH REPUBLIC

July 25: Bohemians 1905 1 Sparta 2; Dukla 0 Ostrava 0.
July 26: Jablonec 2 Brno 0; Pribram 2 Plzen 2; Hradec Kralove 0 Teplice 0; Slovacko 1 Slavia 2.
July 27: Jihlava 0 Mlada Boleslav 1; Ceske Budejovice 1 Liberec 1.

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jablonec	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Slavia	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Sparta	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
M Boleslav	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Plzen	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Pribram	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
C Budejovice	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Liberec	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Dukla	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
H Kralove	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Ostrava	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Teplice	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Boh'ians 1905	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Slovacko	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Jihlava	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Brno	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

DENMARK

July 18: Nordsjaelland 3 Vestsjaelland 2.
July 19: SonderjyskE 0 AaB 0.
July 20: OB 1 Hobro 2; Silkeborg 0 Copenhagen 0; Midtjylland 3 Brondby 1.
July 21: Esbjerg 0 Randers 1.
July 25: Vestsjaelland 3 OB 1.
July 26: AaB 2 Midtjylland 0; Copenhagen 2 Nordsjaelland 1.
July 27: Randers 2 Hobro 1; Esbjerg 1 SonderjyskE 1.
July 28: Brondby 2 Silkeborg 0.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Randers	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
AaB	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
Copenhagen	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Vestsjaelland	2	1	0	1	5	4	3
Nordsjaelland	2	1	0	1	4	4	3
Brondby	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Hobro	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Midtjylland	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
SonderjyskE	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Esbjerg	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Silkeborg	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
OB	2	0	0	2	2	5	0

33-round season (11x3); bottom 2 will be relegated

GEORGIA

Division split after 22-round regular season; teams carried forward full regular-season record

GEORGIA – CHAMPIONSHIP GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo Tb'i (C)	32	21	5	6	67	23	68
Zestafoni	32	19	5	8	48	23	62
Sioni	32	16	7	9	41	33	55
Chikhura	32	13	7	12	56	50	46
Metalurgi	32	13	6	13	35	39	45
Guria	32	12	0	20	31	53	36

GEORGIA – RELEGATION GROUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Torpedo	32	14	6	12	43	44	48
WIT Georgia	32	13	6	13	41	45	45
Dila	32	11	8	13	44	36	41
Spartaki	32	12	4	16	33	38	40
Zugdidi (R)	32	10	6	16	26	42	36
Merani (R)	32	6	4	22	21	60	22

GIBRALTAR

GIBRALTAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lincoln (C)	14	11	3	0	66	6	36
Manchester 62	14	9	3	2	37	11	30
Lynx	14	9	2	3	36	18	29
College Europa	14	5	4	5	31	20	19
Glacis	14	6	1	7	18	32	19
Lions	14	4	2	8	23	33	14
St Joseph's[1]	14	4	1	9	23	30	13
Phoenix (R)	14	0	0	14	10	94	0

[1]St Joseph's stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off

HUNGARY

HUNGARY – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Debrecen (C)	30	18	8	4	66	33	62
Gyor	30	18	8	4	58	32	62
Ferencvaros	30	17	6	7	47	33	57
Videoton	30	15	8	7	52	31	53
Diosgyor	30	12	11	7	45	38	47
Haladas	30	12	10	8	37	31	46
Pecs	30	12	9	9	41	38	45
MTK	30	11	7	12	42	36	40
Honved	30	10	6	14	37	39	36
Kecskemet	30	9	9	12	36	51	36
Paks	30	8	10	12	39	42	34
Papa	30	9	6	15	32	50	33
Ujpest	30	8	8	14	46	51	32
Puskas	30	8	7	15	36	51	31
Mezokov'sd (R)	30	6	6	18	27	52	24
Kaposvar (R)	30	4	7	19	21	54	19

LUXEMBOURG

LUXEMBOURG – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dudelange (C)	26	19	4	3	64	21	61
Fola	26	18	5	3	53	19	59
Differdange	26	17	0	9	53	23	51
Jeunesse E	26	11	10	5	47	35	43
Progres	26	11	9	6	33	26	42
Etzella	26	9	5	12	44	46	32
Kaerjeng	26	9	5	12	32	35	32
Grevenmacher	26	8	8	10	27	34	32
Wiltz	26	9	4	13	40	53	31
Jeunesse C	26	8	6	12	27	42	30
Rumelange	26	6	10	10	25	36	28
Hamm B (R)[1]	26	6	6	14	32	46	24
Swift (R)	26	4	8	14	22	51	20
Racing (R)	26	4	6	16	22	54	18

[1]Hamm Benfica relegated after losing rel/prom play-off

MACEDONIA

MACEDONIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rabotnicki (C)	33	18	8	7	66	35	62
Turnovo	33	18	6	9	61	33	60
Metalurg	33	16	11	6	48	29	59
Shkendija	33	16	9	8	53	32	57
Vardar	33	15	11	7	55	32	56
Pelister	33	14	10	9	40	40	52
Bregalnica	33	11	11	11	34	34	44
Renova	33	10	14	9	42	46	44
G'rno Lisice (R)	33	9	12	12	34	37	39
Makedonija (R)	33	9	5	19	40	56	32
Napredok (R)	33	3	9	21	27	75	18
Gostivar (R)	33	3	6	24	19	70	15

MONTENEGRO

MONTENEGRO – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sutjeska (C)	33	17	12	4	46	21	63
Lovcen	33	17	8	8	52	31	59
Celik	33	15	9	9	47	28	54
Buducnost	33	16	6	11	36	26	54
Petrovac	33	11	13	9	37	31	46
Rudar	33	11	9	13	32	31	42
Grbalj[1]	33	11	10	12	36	40	40
Zeta	33	12	4	17	39	57	40
Mladost	33	11	6	16	38	46	39
Mogren[1,2]	33	11	9	13	45	56	39
Mornar (R)[2]	33	9	9	15	35	47	36
Decic (R)	33	5	9	19	32	61	24

[1]3pts deducted
[2]Mogren stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off; Mornar relegated after losing rel/prom play-off

NORWAY

June 9: Sarpsborg 1 Viking 1; Valerenga 3 Aalesund 0; Stromsgodset 2 Haugesund 1; Stabaek 1 Start 2; Odd 0 Sogndal 0; Sandnes Ulf 1 Bodo/Glimt 0; Molde 4 Brann 2; Rosenborg 3 Lillestrom 1.
June 12: Sogndal 2 Valerenga 0; Start 2 Rosenborg 4; Bodo/Glimt 1 Molde 1; Brann 0 Odd 1; Lillestrom 3 Stromsgodset 0; Aalesund 3 Sandnes Ulf 0; Viking 4 Stabaek 1; Haugesund 4 Sarpsborg 0.
July 5: Molde 3 Sogndal 0.
July 6: Stromsgodset 1 Sandnes Ulf 0; Viking 0 Brann 2; Sarpsborg 2 Bodo/Glimt 1; Stabaek 0 Aalesund 2; Start 3 Lillestrom 1; Rosenborg 5 Haugesund 3.
July 7: Odd 2 Valerenga 2.
July 11: Aalesund 0 Molde 1.
July 12: Sogndal 0 Viking 0; Bodo/Glimt 0 Odd 3; Sandnes Ulf 1 Start 2; Lillestrom 0 Sarpsborg 0; Brann 0 Stromsgodset 1.
July 13: Haugesund 2 Stabaek 0; Valerenga 2 Rosenborg 2.
July 18: Stabaek 1 Brann 1.
July 19: Start 2 Bodo/Glimt 1; Stromsgodset 0 Valerenga 2.
July 20: Molde 3 Sandnes Ulf 1; Odd 0 Haugesund 0; Rosenborg 1 Sogndal 0; Viking 0 Lillestrom 0.
July 22: Sarpsborg 3 Aalesund 2.
July 26: Aalesund 1 Lillestrom 1; Sandnes Ulf 1 Stromsgodset 3.
July 27: Haugesund 5 Start 1; Bodo/Glimt 3 Sarpsborg 4; Molde 3 Rosenborg 1; Sogndal 1 Odd 3; Brann 0 Viking 1.

NORWAY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Molde	17	13	3	1	38	13	42
Stromsgodset	17	10	3	4	28	20	33
Odd	17	9	5	3	23	15	32
Rosenborg	17	8	6	3	35	26	30
Valerenga	16	7	6	3	30	20	27
Viking	17	6	8	3	21	15	26
Lillestrom	17	6	6	5	25	18	24
Sarpsborg	17	6	6	5	25	29	24
Start	17	6	3	8	25	32	21
Sogndal	17	5	4	8	18	26	19
Stabaek	16	6	1	9	21	31	19
Bodo/Glimt	17	5	3	9	25	32	18
Haugesund	17	4	5	8	25	26	17
Aalesund	17	3	6	8	17	22	15
Brann	17	3	3	11	18	30	12
Sandnes Ulf	17	2	4	11	13	32	10

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated, 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

POLAND

Regular season

July 18: Podbeskidzie 2 Pogon 3; Gornik Leczna 1 Wisla 1.
July 19: Jagiellonia 2 Lechia 2; Legia 0 Belchatow 1.
July 20: Lech 4 Piast 0; Zawisza 2 Korona 0; Slask 2 Ruch 0.
July 21: Gornik Zabrze 2 Cracovia 0.
July 25: Belchatow 2 Korona 0; Lechia 1 Podbeskidzie 0.
July 26: Pogon 4 Slask 1; Cracovia 1 Legia 3.
July 27: Ruch 1 Gornik Leczna 2; Zawisza 1 Jagiellonia 3; Gornik Zabrze 1 Lech 1.
July 28: Wisla 1 Piast 1.

POLAND – REGULAR

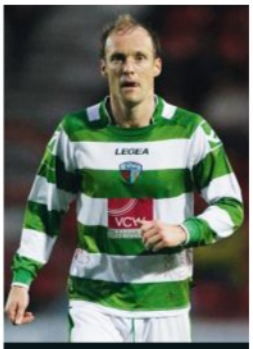
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Pogon	2	2	0	0	7	3	6
Belchatow	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Lech	2	1	1	0	5	1	4
Jagiellonia	2	1	1	0	5	3	4
Gornik Zabrze	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Gornik Leczna	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Lechia	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Legia	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Zawisza	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Slask	2	1	0	1	3	4	3
Wisla	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Piast	2	0	1	1	1	5	1
Podbeskidzie	2	0	0	2	2	4	0
Ruch	2	0	0	2	1	4	0
Cracovia	2	0	0	2	1	5	0
Korona	2	0	0	2	0	4	0

30-round regular season (15x2); top 8 will form championship group, bottom 8 will form relegation group (from which the bottom 2 will go down)

WALES

Ruscoe's Welsh record

Scott Ruscoe's appearance in The New Saints' 1-0 loss to Slovan Bratislava in the Champions League was the 36-year-old midfielder's 30th appearance for a Welsh Premier League club in Europe, overtaking the previous record held by former Carmarthen Town defender Gary Lloyd.



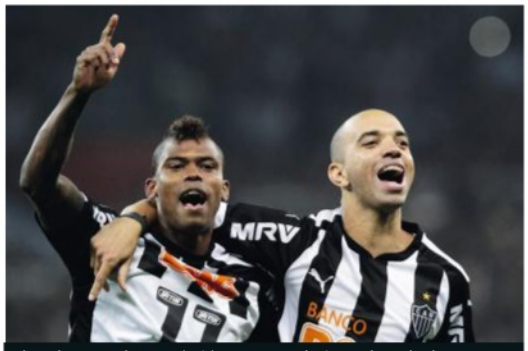
Euro experience...Ruscoe

BRAZIL

Atletico win Recopa

Two own goals in extra-time gave Atletico Mineiro a 5-3 aggregate victory over Sudamericana Cup holders Lanus of Argentina in the Recopa Sudamericana.

Diego Tardelli, who scored the only goal in the away leg, put last year's Libertadores Cup winners further ahead in the return



Victorious...Maicosuel (left) and Tardelli of Atletico Mineiro

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

June 13: Sligo 2 Derry 2; Limerick 2 UCD 1; Dundalk 0 St Patrick's 0; Bray 0 Bohemians 5; Athlone 6 Drogheda 0; Shamrock 0 Cork 2.
June 27: UCD 0 Shamrock 2; St Patrick's 3 Bray 2; Derry 2 Dundalk 2; Cork 3 Limerick 0; Bohemians 2 Athlone 2; Drogheda 1 Sligo 2.
July 4: Bray 1 Drogheda 3; Limerick 1 Bohemians 2.
July 5: Shamrock 2 St Patrick's 1.
July 6: Athlone 0 Derry 1; Sligo 0 Cork 0.
July 11: Athlone 3 Limerick 0; Drogheda 0 Cork 1; Bohemians 1 St Patrick's 1.
July 13: UCD 1 Sligo 0; Shamrock 0 Dundalk 1; Derry 5 Bray 0.
July 18: Bray 0 Shamrock 3; Cork 2 UCD 1.
July 20: Dundalk 2 Athlone 0.
July 25: Bohemians 2 Cork 0; Shamrock 0 Drogheda 1.
July 26: Athlone 0 St Patrick's 2.
July 27: Dundalk 5 Bray 1; UCD 1 Derry 6; Sligo 2 Limerick 0.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dundalk	21	15	4	2	52	17	49
Cork	21	14	4	3	34	16	46
St Patrick's	21	11	7	3	45	24	40
Shamrock	21	12	4	5	29	18	40
Sligo	20	8	5	7	27	17	29
Derry	20	6	9	5	28	23	27
Bohemians	20	5	9	6	26	23	24
Drogheda	21	6	3	12	23	50	21
Limerick	20	5	5	10	18	27	20
UCD	21	4	5	12	21	45	17
Bray	21	4	5	12	16	43	17
Athlone	21	3	2	16	22	38	11

33-round season (11x3); bottom team will be relegated, 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

ROMANIA

July 25: Concordia 0 Astra 2; CS Universitatea 1 Pandurii 1.
July 26: Targu Mures 0 Universitatea Cluj 0; Rapid 1 Steaua 3.
July 27: Botosani 0 Gaz Metan 3; CFR 4 Ceahlaul 0; Brasov 0 Petrolul 1.
July 28: CSM Studentesc 0 Viitorul 0; Dinamo 4 Otelul 0.

ROMANIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CFR	1	1	0	0	4	0	3
Dinamo	1	1	0	0	4	0	3
Gaz Metan	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Steaua	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Astra	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Petrolul	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
CS Univ'tatea	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Pandurii	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
CSM Stud'tesc	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Targu Mures	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Univ Cluj	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Viitorul	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Brasov	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Rapid	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
Concordia	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Botosani	1	0	0	1	0	3	0
Ceahlaul	1	0	0	1	0	4	0
Otelul	1	0	0	1	0	4	0

34-round season (17x2); bottom 6 will be relegated

SAN MARINO

Championship Final

May 27: Folgore/Falciano 0 La Fiorita 2.

SLOVAKIA

SLOVAKIA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slovan (C)	33	24	3	6	63	32	75
Trencin	33	19	6	8	74	35	63
Spartak Trnava	33	16	5	12	47	42	53
Ruzomberok	33	15	5	13	56	51	50
Kosice	33	13	7	13	41	40	46
Senica	33	13	7	13	45	47	46
Sp'tak Myjava	33	13	6	14	45	54	45
Dukla	33	11	9	13	48	48	42
Zilina	33	11	7	15	49	50	40
Zlate Moravce	33	11	5	17	36	47	38
DAC	33	8	8	17	29	57	32
Nitra (R)	33	6	8	19	33	63	26

SLOVENIA

SLOVENIA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maribor (C)	36	24	5	7	78	31	77
Koper	36	21	6	9	52	36	69
Rudar	36	18	9	9	55	33	63
Gorica	36	16	10	10	60	32	58
Zavrc	36	16	5	15	58	63	53
Domzale	36	10	15	11	47	36	45
Olimpija	36	12	6	18	38	56	42
Celje	36	10	7	19	30	58	37
Krka	36	8	7	21	31	64	31
Triglav (R)	36	6	8	22	34	74	26

SWEDEN

July 5: Kalmar 2 Mjallby 1; Falkenberg 1 Halmstad 1; Gefle 1 Hacken 0.
July 6: Orebro 2 Norrkoping 2; Brommapojkarna 1 Malmo 1; Gothenburg 6 Helsingborg 2.
July 7: Atvidaberg 0 AIK 3; Djurgarden 1 Elfsborg 1.
July 12: Mjallby 1 Falkenberg 1; AIK 3 Kalmar 0; Malmo 3 Atvidaberg 0.
July 13: Helsingborg 1 Gefle 1; Elfsborg 2 Brommapojkarna 2; Halmstad 2 Gothenburg 2; Hacken 4 Orebro 1.
July 14: Norrkoping 3 Djurgarden 5.
July 19: Kalmar 1 Malmo 1; Gefle 2 Halmstad 0.
July 20: Falkenberg 4 AIK 1; Gothenburg 3 Mjallby 1; Atvidaberg 3 Brommapojkarna 2; Norrkoping 4 Elfsborg 2; Orebro 1 Helsingborg 1.
July 21: Djurgarden 1 Hacken 2.
July 26: Malmo 3 Kalmar 1; Halmstad 3 Gefle 2.
July 27: Brommapojkarna 2 Atvidaberg 2; Mjallby 3 Gothenburg 0; Elfsborg 3 Norrkoping 0; Helsingborg 1 Orebro 1.
July 28: AIK 3 Falkenberg 0; Hacken 2 Djurgarden 1.

SWEDEN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Malmo	16	11	4	1	30	12	37
AIK	16	9	4	3	33	23	31
Hacken	16	9	3	4	33	20	30
Elfsborg	16	8	4	4	26	17	28
Kalmar	16	7	6	3	22	18	27
Gothenburg	16	6	8	2	27	18	26
Djurgarden	16	5	7	4	24	19	22
Atvidaberg	16	5	5	6	19	27	20
Norrkoping	16	5	4	7	20	29	19
Falkenberg	16	4	5	7	16	21	17
Helsingborg	16	4	5	7	17	23	17
Gefle	16	3	7	6	19	20	16
Orebro	16	3	7	6	18	24	16
Mjallby	16	4	3	9	17	26	15
Halmstad	16	3	5	8	18	29	14
Bromm'karna	16	1	5	10	19	32	8

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated, 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

SWITZERLAND

July 19: Aarau 1 Basle 2; St Gallen 2 Young Boys 2.
July 20: Thun 1 Vaduz 0; Lucerne 1 Sion 1; Zurich 1 Grasshopper 0.
July 23: Aarau 1 Sion 0; Zurich 2 Thun 1.
July 26: Grasshopper 2 Thun 3; Sion 1 St Gallen 0.
July 27: Young Boys 1 Aarau 1; Vaduz 1 Zurich 4; Basle 3 Lucerne 0.

SWITZERLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zurich	3	3	0	0	7	2	9
Basle	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Thun	3	2	0	1	5	4	6
Aarau	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Sion	3	1	1	1	2	2	4
Young Boys	2	0	2	0	3	3	2
St Gallen	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Lucerne	2	0	1	1	1	4	1
Grasshopper	2	0	0	2	2	4	0
Vaduz	2	0	0	2	1	5	0

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated

UKRAINE

July 25: Metalurh Donetsk 0 Dnipro 2.
July 26: Illichivets 1 Volyn 2; Chornomorets 4 Olimpik 0.
July 27: Hoverla 2 Karpaty 2; Shakhtar 2 Metalurh Zaporizhya 0; Dynamo 1 Vorskla 0; Zorya 1 Metalist 2.

UKRAINE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chornomorets	1	1	0	0	4	0	3
Dnipro	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Shakhtar	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Metalist	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Volyn	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Dynamo	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Hoverla	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Karpaty	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Illichivets	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Zorya	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Vorskla	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Metalurh D	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Metalurh Z	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Olimpik	1	0	0	1	0	4	0

26-round season (13x2); bottom team will be relegated

SOUTH AMERICA

RECOPA

(2013 Libertadores Cup winners, Atletico Mineiro v 2013 Sudamericana Cup winners, Lanus)

1st leg

July 16
Lanus (Arg) 0
Atletico Mineiro (Bra) 1 (Diego Tardelli 65)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Arias (Par)

2nd leg

July 23
Atletico Mineiro 4 (Diego Tardelli pen 7, Maicosuel 38, Gomez og 103, Ayala og 112)
Lanus 3 (Ayala 9, S Silva 26, Acosta 90+4)
Aet. **HT:** 2-2. **90mins:** 2-3. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)
Atletico Mineiro 5-3 on agg
Sent off: Acosta (Lanus) 118min

LIBERTADORES CUP

Semi-finals

1st legs

July 22
Nacional (Par) 2 (Montenegro 35, Orue 70)
Defensor Sporting (Uru) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Carrillo (Per)

July 23
San Lorenzo (Arg) 5 (Matos 6, Mas 28, 87, Mercier 70, Buffarini 74)
Bolivar (Bol) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Buitrago (Col)

2nd legs

July 29
Defensor Sporting 1 (Luna 55)
Nacional 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Marques Ribeiro (Bra)
Nacional 2-1 on agg

July 30
Bolivar 1 (Yecerotte 90+1)
San Lorenzo 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Vera (Ecu)
San Lorenzo 5-1 on agg

SUDAMERICANA CUP

1st round draw

Aguilas Doradas (Col) v Emelec (Ecu)
Barcelona (Ecu) v Alianza Lima (Per)
Capiata (Par) v Danubio (Uru)
General Diaz (Par) v Cobresal (Chl)
Huachipato (Chl) v San Jose (Bol)
Inti Gas (Per) v Caracas (Ven)
La Guaira (Ven) v Atletico Nacional (Col)
Millonarios (Col) v Cesar Vallejo (Per)
Nacional (Bol) v Libertad (Par)
Penarol (Uru) v Wilstermann (Bol)
Rentistas (Uru) v Cerro Porteno (Par)
Trujillanos (Ven) v Independiente (Ecu)
Universidad Catolica (Chl) v River Plate (Uru)
Universidad Catolica (Ecu) v Anzoategui (Ven)
Universitario (Bol) v Iquique (Chl)
UTC (Per) v Deportivo Cali (Col)
1st legs - Aug 19-21; 2nd legs - Aug 26-28

Representatives from Argentina and Brazil enter competition in the 2nd round

BOLIVIA

BOLIVIA – CLAUSURA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Univ'sitario (C)	22	12	6	4	38	28	42
San Jose	22	13	2	7	51	30	41
Strongest	22	12	4	6	40	32	40
Real Potosi	22	11	6	5	38	24	39
Bolivar	22	10	3	9	38	32	33
Aurora (R)[1]	22	9	5	8	33	29	32
Oriente	22	9	4	9	30	32	31
Sport Boys	22	7	6	9	25	32	27
Wilstermann	22	7	6	9	25	32	27
Guabira (R)[1]	22	6	4	12	25	41	22
Nacional	22	6	2	14	26	39	20
Blooming	22	6	0	16	32	50	18

[1]Guabira were relegated automatically as the team with the worst points-per-game average over the 2 most recent seasons; Aurora, as the team with the 2nd worst average, went into a rel/prom play-off, which they lost, and so were also relegated

before Victor Ayala and Santiago Silva put the visitors on level terms. Maicosuel looked to have won the game for Atletico just before half-time, but Lautaro Acosta scored in injury time to take the game into extra-time. Gustavo Gomez and Ayala then put past their own keeper, and Acosta was red carded, as the hosts claimed the trophy for the first time.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Moca rule again

A 6-1 aggregate victory over Don Bosco Jarabacoa in the Grand Final gave Moca their third title in the last four years.

MEXICO

Super Cup success

Apertura cup 2013 champions Morelia secured their place in next year's Libertadores Cup with a 5-4 aggregate victory over 2014 clausura cup winners Tigres in the Mexican Super Cup.

Morelia took a commanding 4-1 lead in the home leg with goals from Oscar Fernandez, Jorge Zarate, Hamilton Pereira and Duvier Riascos. Another goal from Riascos in the return ended Tigres' hopes of a comeback.

Reigning league champions Leon lost their opening game of the new apertura campaign, going down 2-1 at home to America.

Osvaldo Martinez opened the scoring before an own goal by goalkeeper William Yarbrough gifted the visitors a second. Mauro Boselli's late penalty was a mere consolation.

On target...Fernandez

BRAZIL

June 4: Sport 1 Bahia 0.
July 16: Sport 1 Botafogo 0; Coritiba 0 Figueirense 2; Gremio 0 Goias 0; Flamengo 1 Paranaense 2; Bahia 0 Sao Paulo 2; Criciuma 3 Fluminense 2.
July 17: Corinthians 2 Internacional 1; Santos 2 Palmeiras 0; Cruzeiro 3 Vitoria 1.
July 19: Sao Paulo 0 Chapecoense 1; Mineiro 1 Bahia 1; Figueirense 0 Gremio 1; Botafogo 1 Coritiba 0.
July 20: Palmeiras 1 Cruzeiro 2; Vitoria 0 Corinthians 0; Internacional 4 Flamengo 0; Fluminense 1 Santos 0; Paranaense 2 Criciuma 0; Goias 0 Sport 0.
July 26: Bahia 0 Internacional 1; Cruzeiro 5 Figueirense 0; Criciuma 1 Vitoria 3; Santos 3 Chapecoense 0.
July 27: Sport 2 Mineiro 1; Corinthians 2 Palmeiras 0; Paranaense 0 Fluminense 3; Goias 2 Sao Paulo 1; Flamengo 1 Botafogo 0; Gremio 2 Coritiba 3.

BRAZIL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruzeiro	12	9	1	2	28	12	28
Corinthians	12	6	5	1	15	6	23
Fluminense	12	7	1	4	20	11	22
Internacional	12	6	4	2	18	11	22
Sport	12	6	3	3	11	11	21
Santos	12	5	5	2	15	6	20
Goias	12	5	5	2	9	8	20
Sao Paulo	12	5	4	3	19	15	19
Paranaense	12	5	4	3	19	16	19
Gremio	12	5	4	3	10	8	19
Mineiro	11	4	3	4	13	12	15
Palmeiras	12	4	1	7	9	16	13
Botafogo	12	3	3	6	14	14	12
Criciuma[1]	12	4	2	6	8	18	11
Chapecoense	11	3	2	6	8	13	11
Vitoria	12	2	5	5	12	15	11
Coritiba	12	2	4	6	11	15	10
Flamengo	12	2	4	6	8	19	10
Bahia	12	2	3	7	8	14	9
Figueirense	12	2	1	9	5	20	7

38-round season (19x2); bottom 4 will be relegated
[1]3pts deducted for fielding an ineligible player

Leading goalscorers
8 Ricardo Goulart (Cruzeiro)
6 Douglas Coutinho (Paranaense)
5 Marcelo Moreno (Cruzeiro)

PARAGUAY

PARAGUAY – APERTURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Libertad (C)	22	15	5	2	41	17	50
Guarani	22	14	4	4	56	31	46
Olimpia	22	9	6	7	32	26	33
Cerro Porteno	22	8	7	7	49	38	31
Sol America	22	7	10	5	36	31	31
Rubio Nu	22	8	6	8	38	37	30
Nacional	22	8	6	8	26	27	30
Luqueno	22	6	10	6	23	25	28
Capiata	22	6	8	8	22	37	26
General Diaz	22	4	7	11	19	34	19
12 de Octubre	22	2	9	11	21	38	15
3 de Febrero	22	2	8	12	22	44	14

No relegation after apertura

VENEZUELA

VENEZUELA – CLAUSURA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zamora (C)	17	12	3	2	45	20	39
Mineros	17	11	4	2	28	12	37
Tachira	17	11	4	2	32	20	37
Trujillanos	17	10	3	4	29	15	33
Tucanes	17	9	6	2	23	14	33
Anzoategui	17	7	6	4	25	17	27
Caracas	17	6	9	2	25	18	27
Lara	17	5	9	3	25	17	24
Aragua	17	6	5	6	13	14	23
La Guaira	17	6	5	6	15	18	23
Venezuela	17	5	7	5	14	20	22
Carabobo	17	5	4	8	17	22	19
Petare	17	4	5	8	14	20	17
Zulia	17	4	3	10	22	31	15
Llaneros	17	3	3	11	16	31	12
Yarac'nos (R)[1]	17	2	4	11	14	30	10
Estudiantes	17	1	6	10	16	32	9
El Vigia (R)[1]	17	3	0	14	14	36	9

[1]The 2 teams with the lowest points total in the combined apertura/clausura table were relegated

Overall 2013-14 season play-off

(apertura winners, Mineros v clausura winners, Zamora)
1st leg - May 18; 2nd leg - May 25
Zamora v Mineros 4-1, 0-2 (agg 4-3)

CONCACAF

COSTA RICA

Clausura

Final
1st leg - May 5; 2nd leg - May 10
Alajuelense v Saprissa 0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Championship Final
1st leg - July 12; 2nd leg - July 20
Don Bosco Jarabacoa v Moca 0-3, 1-3 (agg 1-6)

HONDURAS

Clausura

Final
1st leg - May 1; 2nd leg - May 4
Marathon v Olimpia 0-0, 0-0
(agg 0-0, Olimpia 4-2 on pens)

JAMAICA

Championship Final
May 20: Montego Bay United 5 Waterhouse 2.

MEXICO

Apertura

Regular season
July 18: Queretaro 1 Pumas 3; Tijuana 0 Puebla 1.
July 19: Cruz Azul 0 Pachuca 1; Veracruz 0 Santos 1; Monterrey 3 Leones Negros 1; Leon 1 America 2; Atlas 0 Tigres 0.
July 20: Toluca 0 Morelia 0; Guadalajara 1 Chiapas 1.
July 25: Morelia 0 Atlas 2; Santos 1 Cruz Azul 1.
July 26: Puebla 0 Veracruz 0; America 2 Tijuana 1; Tigres 4 Leon 2; Pachuca 0 Monterrey 1; Chiapas 2 Toluca 1.
July 27: Pumas 0 Guadalajara 1; Leones Negros 0 Queretaro 1.

MEXICO – APERTURA: REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Monterrey	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
America	2	2	0	0	4	2	6
Tigres	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Atlas	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
Chiapas	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Guadalajara	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Santos	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Puebla	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Pumas	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Pachuca	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Queretaro	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Cruz Azul	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Toluca	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Veracruz	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Morelia	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
Tijuana	2	0	0	2	1	3	0
Leon	2	0	0	2	3	6	0
Leones Negros	2	0	0	2	1	4	0

17-round regular season (17x1); top 8 will enter championship play-offs; no relegation after apertura

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
W Connect'n (C)	24	14	8	2	51	19	50
Central	24	12	9	3	49	21	45
Defence Force	24	14	3	7	47	32	45
Point Fortin	24	13	3	8	37	25	42
NE Stars	24	12	6	6	28	17	42
Caledonia AIA	24	7	7	10	34	38	28
Police	24	8	3	13	30	45	27
SJ Jabloteh	24	4	4	16	23	53	16
St Ann's	24	2	1	21	19	68	7

No relegation at the end of this season

UNITED STATES

Regular season
June 4: Columbus 1 Salt Lake 1; Colorado 0 Chicago 0.
June 6: Houston 0 Kansas City 2.
June 7: Toronto 1 San Jose 0; DC United 0 Columbus 0; Philadelphia 3 Vancouver 3; Dallas 3 Colorado 2; Chicago 2 Seattle 3; Salt Lake 1 Portland 3.
June 8: New England 0 New York Red Bulls 2; Los Angeles 1 Chivas 1.
June 11: Montreal 2 DC United 4; Portland 2 Dallas 2.
June 25: Vancouver 0 Montreal 0.
June 27: New York Red Bulls 2 Toronto 2; Portland 0 Kansas City 1.
June 28: DC United 0 Seattle 1; New England 1 Philadelphia 3; Colorado 2 Vancouver 0; Chivas 1 Salt Lake 0; San Jose 0 Los Angeles 1.
June 29: Columbus 0 Dallas 0; Montreal 3 Houston 0.
July 2: Chicago 1 Toronto 1; San Jose 0 Chivas 1.
July 4: Houston 2 New York Red Bulls 2; Dallas 2 Philadelphia 1; Colorado 1 Columbus 1; Salt Lake 2 New England 1; Los Angeles 2 Portland 2.
July 5: Toronto 1 DC United 2; Vancouver 1 Seattle 0; Chivas 1 Montreal 0.
July 6: Kansas City 1 Chicago 1.
July 11: San Jose 1 DC United 2.
July 12: Philadelphia 3 Colorado 3; Toronto 4 Houston 2; New York Red Bulls 4 Columbus 1; Montreal 1 Kansas City 2; New England 0 Chicago 1; Vancouver 1 Chivas 3; Los Angeles 1 Salt Lake 0.
July 13: Seattle 2 Portland 0.
July 16: Philadelphia 3 New York Red Bulls 1; Columbus 1 Kansas City 2; Toronto 1 Vancouver 1; Los Angeles 5 New England 1.
July 18: Portland 2 Colorado 1.
July 19: Kansas City 2 Los Angeles 1; New York Red Bulls 1 San Jose 1; Columbus 2 Montreal 1; Chicago 1 Philadelphia 1; Houston 2 Toronto 2; Dallas 2 New England 0; Salt Lake 1 Vancouver 1.
July 20: DC United 3 Chivas 1.
July 23: San Jose 5 Chicago 1.
July 24: Salt Lake 3 Montreal 1.
July 25: Colorado 3 Chivas 0.
July 26: Toronto 1 Kansas City 2; New England 1 Columbus 2.
July 27: Vancouver 2 Dallas 2; Montreal 2 Portland 3.
July 28: Seattle 0 Los Angeles 3.

USA – REGULAR: EASTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kansas City	21	11	5	5	31	19	38
DC United	19	10	4	5	29	20	34
Toronto	18	7	5	6	27	25	26
Columbus	21	6	8	7	25	27	26
New York RB	20	5	9	6	32	31	24
Philadelphia	21	5	8	8	33	35	23
New England	20	7	2	11	25	33	23
Chicago	19	3	11	5	27	33	20
Houston	20	5	4	11	22	40	19
Montreal	20	3	5	12	21	37	14

34-round regular season (7x3 & 2x2 in own conference, 9x1 in western conference)

USA – REGULAR: WESTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Seattle	19	12	2	5	35	27	38
Salt Lake	20	8	8	4	31	26	32
Los Angeles	18	8	6	4	29	16	30
Colorado	20	8	6	6	31	24	30
Dallas	21	8	6	7	34	31	30
Vancouver	20	6	10	4	31	29	28
Portland	21	6	9	6	35	35	27
Chivas	20	6	5	9	21	33	23
San Jose	18	5	5	8	22	20	20

34-round regular season (8x3 in own conference, 10x1 in eastern conference)

Top 5 in both conferences will enter championship play-offs; no relegation from this league

Leading goalscorers
17 Bradley Wright-Phillips (New York Red Bulls)
14 Dom Dwyer (Kansas City)
14 Erick Torres (Chivas)
11 Jermain Defoe (Toronto)
10 Robbie Keane (Los Angeles)
9 Clint Dempsey (Seattle)

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A
June 6: Al Hilal (Sud) 1 AS Vita (DRC) 1.
June 8: TP Mazembe (DRC) 1 Zamalek (Egy) 0.
July 27: AS Vita 2 Al Hilal 1; Zamalek 0 TP Mazembe 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
TP Mazembe	4	2	1	1	2	1	7
AS Vita	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Zamalek	4	1	1	2	3	4	4
Al Hilal	4	1	1	2	4	5	4

EGYPT

Ahly's eight in a row

Al Ahly claimed their eighth successive domestic championship following a 0-0 draw with closest challengers Smouha on the last day of the Premier League season. This was the first time a league campaign had been completed since the suspension of the 2011-12 season and the annulment of the subsequent tournament.

Ahly finished ahead of Smouha on goal difference, with both teams qualifying for next year's African Champions League.

Smouha did get their revenge in the Egyptian Cup, beating Ahly 2-1 in the semi-finals, but they then lost 1-0 to holders Zamalek in the Final. Smouha midfielder Tarek Hamed was sent off before Hazem Emam's winning goal in the last minute.

Champions...Al Ahly celebrate an eighth successive league title

LIBERIA

Ebola precaution

All football was suspended at the end of July in a bid to halt the spread of the deadly Ebola virus throughout the country. The disease is passed through bodily contact.

Group B

June 7: ES Setif (Alg) 1 Al Ahly Benghazi (Lby) 1.
June 8: Esperance (Tun) 2 CS Sfaxien (Tun) 1.
July 25: Al Ahly Benghazi 0 ES Setif 2.
July 26: CS Sfaxien 1 Esperance 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ES Setif	4	2	2	0	6	3	8
CS Sfaxien	4	2	1	1	6	4	7
Al Ahly Ben'zi	4	1	1	2	5	8	4
Esperance	4	1	0	3	5	7	3

Remaining matchdays: *Aug 8-10, Aug 22-24*

Top 2 in both groups qualify for semi-finals

ALGERIA

ALGERIA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
USM Alger (C)	30	20	8	2	49	21	68
JS Kabylie	30	15	9	6	39	21	54
ES Setif	30	15	8	7	40	26	53
MC El Eulma	30	13	9	8	38	29	48
USM Harrach	30	13	8	9	34	27	47
MC Alger	30	13	6	11	26	25	45
RC Arbaa	30	12	8	10	33	32	44
ASO Chlef	30	11	10	9	29	20	43
JS Saoura	30	12	7	11	39	36	43
Constantine	30	10	11	9	29	32	41
MO Bejaia	30	10	6	14	29	35	36
MC Oran	30	9	8	13	33	40	35
Belouizdad	30	9	5	16	26	33	32
JSM Bejaia (R)	30	7	7	16	24	44	28
BB Arreridj (R)	30	4	9	17	23	47	21
Ain Fakroun (R)	30	5	5	20	16	39	20

BOTSWANA

BOTSWANA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
T'p Rollers (C)	30	18	10	2	44	14	64
Defence Force[1]	30	21	4	5	43	14	61
Gaborone	30	17	10	3	43	20	61
Centre Chiefs	30	18	6	6	50	23	60
Nico	30	12	8	10	44	43	44
Satmos	30	12	5	13	43	43	41
Wonder	30	11	6	13	32	38	39
Motlakase	30	10	8	12	32	35	38
Meat Com'sion	30	9	10	11	32	37	37
Ex'n Gunners	30	10	5	15	32	31	35
ECCO City	30	8	10	12	39	39	34
Notwane	30	9	7	14	27	41	34
Orapa	30	9	6	15	30	45	33
UF Santos (R)	30	9	3	18	39	56	30
Miscell'us (R)	30	7	7	16	25	48	28
TAFIC (R)	30	6	3	21	29	57	21

[1]*6pts deducted for breaching FA regulations*

EGYPT

EGYPT – CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY-OFFS – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahly (C)	3	2	1	0	5	0	7
Smouha	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
Zamalek	3	1	0	2	3	3	3
Petrojet	3	0	0	3	1	10	0

GABON

GABON – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mang'sport[1] (C)	26	13	12	1	43	15	50
Mounana	26	14	8	4	43	26	50
US Bitam[1]	26	14	7	5	30	19	48
Missile	26	12	11	3	33	18	47
Sapins	26	13	8	5	37	23	47
Cercle Mberi	26	10	7	9	30	26	37
Oyem	26	10	5	11	29	30	35
Ombilianziani	26	9	6	11	33	38	33
Pelican	26	7	9	10	26	30	30
Solidarite	26	7	9	10	23	31	30
Port-Gentil	26	7	5	14	16	25	26
Bongoville	26	5	8	13	24	45	23
Sogea (R)	26	4	6	16	17	40	18
Ocean Club (R)	26	4	5	17	27	45	17

[1]*1pt deducted*

GAMBIA

GAMBIA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Banjul (C)	22	12	6	4	34	19	42
GAMTEL	22	9	10	3	27	20	37
Ports Authority	22	8	8	6	23	18	32
Wallidan	22	7	10	5	29	25	31
Brikama	22	9	4	9	22	21	31
Bakau	22	6	10	6	17	15	28
Armed Forces	22	8	4	10	19	23	28
Interior	22	7	5	10	21	29	26
Hawks	22	6	7	9	16	18	25
Banjul	22	5	10	7	13	15	25
Steve Biko (R)	22	6	6	10	18	27	24
Samger (R)	22	6	6	10	16	25	24

GHANA

GHANA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Asante K'ko (C)	30	17	4	9	37	25	55
Heart of Lions	30	14	5	11	35	33	47
Hearts of Oak	30	13	7	10	33	33	46
Ashanti Gold	30	12	9	9	31	28	45
Bechem	30	11	9	10	33	31	42
Inter Allies	30	12	5	13	31	32	41
Sekondi H'cas	30	11	8	11	31	27	41
All Stars	30	11	8	11	31	25	41
Medeama	30	10	10	10	27	28	40
New Edubiase	30	11	7	12	25	26	40
Aduana Stars	30	11	7	12	31	28	40
Berekum C	30	10	10	10	25	28	40
Liberty Prof's	30	12	4	14	27	33	40
King Faisal (R)	30	10	8	12	25	30	38
Ebusua D (R)	30	9	8	13	28	29	35
Amidaus (R)	30	10	3	17	28	42	33

IVORY COAST

IVORY COAST – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sewe (C)	26	17	6	3	37	14	57
SC Gagnoa	26	17	4	5	44	25	55
ASEC	26	14	8	4	34	17	50
SOA	26	10	8	8	28	22	38
AFAD	26	9	9	8	27	27	36
Tanda	26	8	10	8	18	22	34
Stella	26	7	11	8	21	23	32
Denguele	26	8	6	12	24	27	30
Africa Sports	26	8	6	12	22	27	30
AS Indenie	26	8	6	12	22	30	30
Korhogo	26	9	3	14	19	27	30
JCAT	26	8	6	12	20	31	30
Bassam (R)	26	5	13	8	23	25	28
Bouafle (R)	26	3	6	17	14	36	15

MOROCCO

MOROCCO – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Moghreb (C)	30	16	10	4	36	25	58
Raja	30	16	7	7	40	15	55
KAC Marr'kech	30	11	15	4	30	19	48
FUS	30	12	12	6	31	21	48
Difaa	30	10	15	5	30	19	45
Wydad Casab'a	30	10	13	7	34	29	43
FAR	30	9	12	9	30	30	39
Hassania	30	10	8	12	36	43	38
RSB	30	6	17	7	24	22	35
Chabab Rif[1]	30	10	6	14	23	32	35
Olympic Safi	30	7	12	11	28	30	33
KAC Kenitra	30	6	14	10	21	31	32
Maghreb	30	7	10	13	27	36	31
O Khouribga[2]	30	8	9	13	21	32	31
AS Sale (R)	30	6	11	13	25	33	29
Wydad Fes (R)	30	5	11	14	23	42	26

[1]*1pt deducted* [2]*2pts deducted*

NAMIBIA

NAMIBIA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Black Africa (C)	22	13	7	2	32	14	46
African Stars	22	14	3	5	36	17	45
Orlando P'tes	22	12	6	4	28	19	42
Tigers	22	10	6	6	32	26	36
Blue Waters	22	9	5	8	37	31	32
Tura Magic	22	8	7	7	21	19	31
Civics	22	8	6	8	22	20	30
Ramblers	22	7	5	10	24	28	26
United Stars	22	7	5	10	26	35	26
Eleven Arrows	22	6	1	15	24	36	19
Rundu Ch's (R)	22	5	3	14	20	38	18
Blue Boys (R)	22	4	4	14	20	39	16

TANZANIA

TANZANIA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Azam (C)	26	18	8	0	51	15	62
Young Africans	26	16	8	2	61	19	56
Mbeya City	26	13	10	3	33	20	49
Simba	26	9	11	6	41	27	38
Kagera Sugar	26	9	11	6	23	20	38
Ruvu Shooting	26	10	8	8	28	32	38
Mtibwa Sugar	26	7	10	9	30	31	31
Ruvu Stars	26	10	1	15	23	40	31
Coastal Union	26	6	11	9	16	20	29
Prisons	26	6	10	10	25	32	28
JKT Mgambo	26	6	8	12	18	35	26
Ashanti Utd (R)	26	6	7	13	20	39	25
JKT Oljoro (R)	26	3	10	13	19	37	19
Rhino R'rs (R)	26	3	7	16	17	38	16

UGANDA

UGANDA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
KCCA (C)	30	18	6	6	60	24	60
SCVU	30	16	11	3	41	17	59
URA	30	14	12	4	47	18	54
Vipers	30	13	12	5	35	20	51
Soana	30	13	8	9	30	31	47
BUL	30	11	12	7	28	20	45
SC Villa	30	11	11	8	33	34	44
Kiira Young	30	11	10	9	26	23	43
Police	30	9	12	9	38	31	39
Express	30	10	9	11	31	28	39
Simba	30	9	9	12	20	26	36
Bright Stars	30	5	14	11	20	35	29
Entebbe	30	4	16	10	29	43	28
Masaka (R)	30	5	12	13	26	36	27
Proline (R)	30	5	6	19	21	45	21
CRO (R)	30	3	6	21	15	69	15

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals draw

Al Ain (UAE) v Al Ittihad (Sau)
Al Hilal (Sau) v Al Sadd (Qat)
Pohang Steelers (SKo) v Seoul (SKo)
W Sydney (Aus) v Guangzhou Evergrande (Chn)
1st legs - Aug 19/20; 2nd legs - Aug 26/27

BAHRAIN

BAHRAIN – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Riffa (C)	18	11	5	2	24	12	38
Manama	18	11	4	3	33	16	37
Al Hadd	18	9	7	2	32	16	34
Muharraq	18	9	7	2	26	14	34
Busaiteen	18	6	4	8	27	26	22
Al Hala	18	4	8	6	21	20	20
Malkiya	18	5	5	8	18	24	20
Al Shabab	18	3	8	7	18	26	17
Al Najma	18	2	7	9	15	29	13
Sitra (R)	18	1	3	14	14	45	6

BANGLADESH

BANGLADESH – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
S'kh Jamal (C)	27	19	7	1	78	26	64
Abahani D'ka	27	14	10	3	36	16	52
Muktijoddha	27	14	7	6	54	26	49
Mohammedan	27	12	9	6	36	25	45
Brothers Union	27	10	8	9	35	33	38
S'kh Russell	27	8	8	11	38	35	32
BJMC	27	8	6	13	39	49	30
Abahani C'ng	27	6	7	14	18	39	25
Feni	27	2	12	13	30	48	18
Baridhara (R)	27	2	6	19	18	85	12

HONG KONG

HONG KONG – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kitchee (C)	18	15	3	0	47	12	48
Sun Pegasus	18	10	2	6	40	28	32
South China	18	8	8	2	35	24	32
Southern	18	5	6	7	25	32	21
Rangers	18	5	6	7	23	32	21
Eastern	18	5	6	7	34	37	21
Yuen Long	18	5	5	8	25	33	20
Sun Hei	18	5	4	9	32	41	19
Citizen	18	4	6	8	25	33	18
Yokohama	18	3	4	11	25	39	13
Happy Valley[1]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tuen Mun[1]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

[1]*Happy Valley & Tuen Mun suspended from league as match-fixing allegations were investigated*

INDIA

INDIA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bengaluru (C)	24	14	5	5	42	28	47
East Bengal	24	12	7	5	39	23	43
Salgaocar	24	11	6	7	36	25	39
Dempo	24	9	8	7	31	25	35
Sporting Goa	24	9	7	8	34	34	34
Shillong Lajong	24	8	9	7	35	37	33
Pune	24	7	8	9	28	32	29
Mohun Bagan	24	6	10	8	23	24	28
Mumbai	24	5	13	6	31	32	28
United SC	24	5	11	8	22	32	26
Churchill Bros	24	6	7	11	25	37	25
Rangdajied	24	6	7	11	29	38	25
Moham'dan (R)	24	6	6	12	27	35	24

BANGLADESH

Second league crown

Sheikh Jamal won the league for a second time, wrapping up the title with a 1-0 victory over nearest challengers Abahani. Haitian forward Wedson Anselme scored the only goal of the game. A 6-0 win against Baridhara next time out saw last season's second-tier winners relegated.

Cup triumph...Kean

SINGAPORE

First of three

DPMM completed the first leg of a potential domestic treble with a 2-0 victory over Tanjong Pagar United in the League Cup Final.

Boris Raspudic and Adi Said were on target for the Brunei-based side, who are coached by ex-Blackburn Rovers boss Steve Kean. They also lead the S.League table and are in the semi-finals of the Singapore Cup.

VANUATU

Tafea retain title

Defending champions Tafea retained their domestic title, beating Amicale 3-1 in the Final of the National Super League. Both teams will enter the 2014-15 OFC Champions League at the group stage.

JAPAN

July 15: Sanfrecce 1 Yokohama 2; Cerezo 1 Kawasaki 2.
July 19: Urawa 1 Albirex 0; Shimizu 0 Kawasaki 2; Tokyo 1 Kashima 1; Omiya 3 Sanfrecce 3; Kashiwa 0 Vegalta 0; Nagoya 1 Tokushima 1; Gamba 2 Ventforet 0; Cerezo 2 Yokohama 2; Vissel 0 Sagan 1.
July 23: Vegalta 3 Nagoya 3; Kashima 2 Omiya 2; Ventforet 0 Cerezo 0; Albirex 0 Tokyo 1; Gamba 4 Shimizu 0; Sanfrecce 5 Kashiwa 2; Tokushima 0 Urawa 2; Sagan 0 Kawasaki 1; Yokohama 1 Vissel 1.
July 27: Urawa 1 Kashima 1; Shimizu 3 Kashiwa 0; Tokyo 3 Vegalta 0; Omiya 1 Tokushima 3; Kawasaki 1 Albirex 0; Nagoya 1 Yokohama 1; Cerezo 0 Sagan 1; Vissel 1 Gamba 5; Sanfrecce 1 Ventforet 1.

JAPAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Urawa	17	11	3	3	23	10	36
Sagan	17	11	1	5	25	13	34
Kawasaki	17	10	3	4	30	16	33
Kashima	17	8	3	6	29	20	27
Sanfrecce	17	7	6	4	26	21	27
Vissel	17	6	7	4	28	24	25
Tokyo	17	7	4	6	19	15	25
Gamba	17	7	3	7	25	20	24
Kashiwa	17	6	6	5	18	22	24
Yokohama	17	6	5	6	19	15	23
Albirex	17	5	7	5	14	15	22
Shimizu	17	6	3	8	21	24	21
Vegalta	17	5	5	7	14	26	20
Nagoya	17	5	4	8	23	29	19
Cerezo	17	4	6	7	19	19	18
Ventforet	17	4	6	7	12	17	18
Omiya	17	3	6	8	23	32	15
Tokushima	17	2	2	13	7	37	8

34-round season (17x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

JORDAN

JORDAN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Wehdat (C)	22	14	4	4	31	12	46
Al Faisaly	22	12	6	4	29	18	42
Al Jazeera	22	9	8	5	26	18	35
That Ras	22	7	13	2	26	18	34
Al Buqa'a	22	7	8	7	33	29	29
Al Hussein	22	8	5	9	28	30	29
Al Ramtha	22	7	8	7	28	31	29
Al Sareeh	22	5	11	6	25	26	26
Shabab Ordon	22	7	5	10	32	42	26
Mansheyat	22	6	7	9	27	29	25
Al Arabi (R)	22	7	4	11	29	36	25
Al Sheikh H (R)	22	3	1	18	21	46	10

KUWAIT

KUWAIT – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Qadsia (C)	26	21	5	0	66	14	68
Kuwait SC	26	20	4	2	67	19	64
Al Jahra	26	17	4	5	46	35	55
Kazma	26	15	7	4	42	26	52
Al Arabi	26	12	7	7	53	29	43
Al Salmiya	26	11	4	11	54	47	37
Al Tadamun	26	11	3	12	45	47	36
Al Naser	26	9	6	11	40	42	33
Khaitan	26	8	4	14	23	44	28
Al Yarmouk	26	7	6	13	21	41	27
Al Sulibkat	26	4	7	15	27	51	19
Al Sahel	26	5	3	18	28	51	18
Al Shabab	26	4	6	16	19	48	18
Al Fahaheel	26	3	4	19	21	58	13

No relegation at the end of this season

LEBANON

LEBANON – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Nejmeh (C)	22	12	8	2	48	24	44
Safa	22	11	8	3	42	23	41
Racing	22	11	5	6	38	31	38
Al Ahed	22	10	7	5	30	26	37
Akhaa Ahli	22	7	10	5	36	26	31
Tripoli SC	22	8	7	7	23	26	31
Sh'b Al Sahel	22	6	12	4	40	26	30
Al Ansar	22	7	9	6	28	23	30
Tadamon Sour	22	5	7	10	22	31	22
Salam Zgharta	22	6	4	12	27	46	22
Mabarrah (R)	22	5	3	14	21	50	18
Egtmaaey (R)	22	2	4	16	26	49	10

MALAYSIA

MALAYSIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Johor DT (C)	22	13	5	4	39	22	44
Selangor	22	12	5	5	28	19	41
Pahang	22	11	4	7	36	30	37
Terengganu	22	10	6	6	38	28	36
Sime Darby	22	9	4	9	32	32	31
Kelantan	22	10	1	11	26	29	31
Sarawak	22	9	3	10	26	31	30
Lions XII	22	8	4	10	26	27	28
Perak	22	8	2	12	22	27	26
ATM	22	6	6	10	29	34	24
T-Team (R)	22	6	6	10	21	28	24
PKNS (R)	22	4	6	12	24	40	18

OMAN

OMAN – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Nahda (C)	26	18	3	5	57	23	57
Fanja	26	15	7	4	44	27	52
Al Suwaiq	26	13	8	5	48	32	47
Al Seeb	26	11	9	6	38	27	42
Al Musannah	26	9	10	7	25	24	37
Dhofar	26	9	9	8	28	19	36
Sohar	26	9	9	8	35	35	36
Saham	26	9	8	9	36	34	35
Sur	26	9	7	10	38	38	34
Al Shabab	26	8	10	8	36	38	34
Al Oruba	26	9	7	10	29	34	34
Al Nasr[1]	26	7	7	12	27	35	28
Mjees (R)	26	3	5	18	27	65	14
Al Ittihad (R)	26	1	5	20	20	57	8

[1]Al Nasr stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off

PHILIPPINES

PHILIPPINES – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Global (C)	24	20	2	2	112	20	62
Loyola	24	15	4	5	65	29	49
Kaya	24	14	4	6	64	28	46
Stallion	24	10	8	6	42	37	38
Green Archers	24	10	7	7	38	38	37
Pachanga	24	8	6	10	36	39	30
Army	24	5	2	17	25	77	17
Socceroo	24	4	4	16	31	85	16
PSG (R)	24	2	3	19	14	74	9

QATAR

QATAR – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lekhwiya (C)	26	16	5	5	55	30	53
El Jaish	26	14	6	6	39	27	48
Al Sadd	26	13	8	5	54	30	47
Al Sailiya	26	11	9	6	45	37	42
Al Arabi	26	11	6	9	41	41	39
Al Ahli	26	9	7	10	48	50	34
Umm Salal	26	9	7	10	34	36	34
Al Gharafa	26	8	8	10	40	41	32
Al Wakrah	26	8	8	10	41	48	32
Qatar SC	26	8	7	11	34	40	31
Al Khor	26	5	15	6	29	30	30
Al Kharitiyath	26	7	8	11	31	34	29
Al Rayyan (R)	26	7	8	11	34	40	29
Muaither (R)	26	4	2	20	28	69	14

SAUDI ARABIA

SAUDI ARABIA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Nassr (C)	26	20	5	1	60	21	65
Al Hilal	26	20	3	3	60	24	63
Al Ahli	26	12	9	5	48	24	45
Al Shabab	26	9	10	7	42	38	37
Al Taawon	26	8	11	7	33	28	35
Al Ittihad	26	8	8	10	45	46	32
Al Faisaly	26	8	8	10	28	35	32
Al Orubah	26	5	14	7	24	33	29
Al Raed	26	7	8	11	21	33	29
Al Fateh	26	7	7	12	33	39	28
Najran	26	8	4	14	32	43	28
Al Shoalah	26	6	8	12	30	42	26
Al Ettifaq (R)	26	6	8	12	30	41	26
Al Nahda (R)	26	3	7	16	29	68	16

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahli (C)	26	20	4	2	56	28	64
Al Wahda	26	13	9	4	53	33	48
Al Jazira	26	12	9	5	46	35	45
Al Shabab	26	13	5	8	42	28	44
Al Nasr	26	13	5	8	43	32	44
Al Ain	26	12	7	7	52	33	43
Al Sharjah	26	10	10	6	29	25	40
Al Dhafra	26	9	8	9	44	45	35
Bani Yas	26	8	7	11	43	42	31
Ajman	26	7	7	12	39	46	28
Emirates	26	6	7	13	40	53	25
Al Wasl	26	7	4	15	32	47	25
Dubai (R)	26	3	6	17	24	63	15
Al Shaab (R)	26	3	4	19	28	61	13

OCEANIA

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Championship Final
May 23: Hekari United 3 Lae 0.
Abandoned in 70th minute because of crowd trouble; result stood

VANUATU

Championship Final
July 19: Tafea 3 Amicale 1.

KEY TO TABLES

(C) = champions
(Q) = qualified for next stage
(R) = relegated

August 2014 Vol 54 No 12

EDITOR Gavin Hamilton
ASSISTANT EDITOR Nich Hills
DESIGN DIRECTOR Kevin Eason
PICTURE EDITOR Duncan Bond
NEWS EDITOR Jamie Rainbow
DESIGN EDITOR Jamie Latchford
DESIGN Dave Corbett
EDITORIAL SECRETARY June Hiscock

PICTURES
Pictures copyright: Press Association Images, Getty Images, Action Images and Reuters

Thanks this issue to
Richard Lee, Dean Chillmaid, Peter Neish, Dave Rallis

EDITORIAL
Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU
Tel: +44 (0) 20 3148 4817
Fax: +44 (0) 20 3148 8130
E-mail: world_soccer@ipcmedia.com

ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP
Kerry Edmondson
Tel: +44 (0) 20 3148 2515
+44 (0) 20 3148 2823
E-mail: kerry_edmondson@ipcmedia.com

PRODUCTION MANAGER Tom Jennings
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR Hamish Dawson
MANAGING DIRECTOR Paul Williams

Advertising +44 (0) 20 3148 2503
+44 (0) 20 3148 2823
Back issues +44 (0) 20 3148 4816
Binders +44 (0) 20 3148 4816

International licensing enquiries
+44 (0) 20 314 85490
E-mail: bianca_hamilton-foster@ipcmedia.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS ORDER HOTLINE
+44 (0)845 676 7778
E-mail: ipcsubs@qss-uk.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS RATES
Annual sub is for 12 months (13 issues, prices include postage) UK: £59.99 Europe/Eire (inc. VAT): 98.85 euros (airmail) USA: $144.48 (airmail) Rest of world: £99.25 (airmail)

Periodicals paid at Rahway, NJ Postmaster: send address changes to *World Soccer*, c/o MAIL America, 365 Blair Road, Avenel NJ 07001, USA. USPS004075

SUBSCRIPTIONS DEPARTMENT
Rockwood House, 9-17 Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3DH, England Tel: +44 (0) 1444 475 675

WorldSoccer is a member of ESM EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

● A Bola (Portugal) ● De Telegraaf (Holland) ● Elf Voetbal (Holland) ● Fanatik (Turkey) ● Frankfurter Allgemeine (Germany) ● Goal News (Greece) ● Kicker (Germany) ● Marca (Spain) ● Nemzeti (Hungary) ● So Foot (France) ● Sport-Express (Russia) ● Sport/Foot (Belgium) ● TIPS Bladet (Denmark) ● World Soccer (UK)

● Titan Sport (China) ● KickOff (S Africa) Netease (China) ● SportalKorea (S Korea).

World Soccer's GREAT TEAMS

Lazio 1999-2000

Italian side which cost owner Cragnotti millions in the search for success

Heading for silverware...Lazio line up for the cameras before their European Cup-winners Cup victory over Mallorca

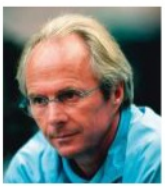
World Soccer's November 1998 edition carried a picture of Chile star Marcelo Salas on its front cover alongside the headline "£70m Lazio. Salas heads the most expensive team in history".

Sergio Cragnotti, owner of an Italian food-processing empire, had bankrolled the Roman club from 1992, spending millions on the likes of Paul Gascoigne and securing plenty of publicity but no trophies – apart from the Italian Cup in 1998. So Cragnotti spent again, investing an astonishing £70m in Italian Christian Vieri, Yugoslavs (as they were then) Dejan Stankovic and Sinisa Mihajlovic, and of course Salas. Croat Alen Boksic and Czech Pavel Nedved were already on the books, not forgetting 33-year-old playmaker Roberto Mancini.

In charge of all this expensive talent was Swedish coach Sven Goran Eriksson, who started the ball rolling with success in the 1999 European Cup-winners Cup Final, Lazio beating Mallorca 2-1 with goals from Vieri and Nedved.

The following August they beat Champions League winners Manchester United 1-0 to claim the UEFA Super Cup and the scudetto was finally clinched in 2000, alongside an Italian Cup success. By this time Vieri had been sold to Internazionale but Cragnotti had spent again on Juan Sebastien Veron, Diego Simeone and Fabrizio Ravanelli. He had eventually got his somewhat expensive reward. WS

THE COACH AND HIS TEAM



Sven Goran Eriksson
Made his name with IFK Gothenburg, winning the Swedish title, cup and UEFA Cup in 1982. Moved to Portugal the next season and guided Benfica to the UEFA Cup Final in 1983, losing to Anderlecht. After spells at Roma and Fiorentina, he returned to Benfica, winning the Portuguese title in 1990 and reaching the Champions League Final, losing to Milan. He joined Sampdoria in 1992, winning the Italian Cup two years later, before presiding over Lazio's golden era.

Tactics
In typical Eriksson fashion, Lazio lined up for the 1999 Cup-winners Cup Final in a 4-4-2. With a solid back four – although Favalli liked to get forward when he could – they played a cautious, defensive game that came to life on the counter-attack with the pace of Stankovic and Nedved. Almeyda played the holding role, with Mancini further forward behind the front two.

THE STARTING XI

Luca Marchegiani
Goalkeeper
The world's most expensive keeper when he joined in 1993 for £6m from Torino. Stayed for 10 years.

Giuseppe Pancaro
Right-back
Journeyman who spent five seasons at Cagliari before signing in 1997. Could played on either flank.

Alessandro Nesta
Centre-back
Inspirational captain who suffered with injuries after cruciate ligament damage at the 1998 World Cup.

Sinisa Mihajlovic
Centre-back
European Cup winner with Red Star Belgrade in 1991, he spent 14 years in Serie A. Now Sampdoria coach.

Giuseppe Favalli
Left-back
Succeeded Nesta as Lazio skipper in 2002 and went on to play for both Milan clubs.

Dejan Stankovic
Right midfield
Played for three different countries in World Cup finals: Yugoslavia, Serbia-Montenegro and Serbia.

Roberto Mancini
Centre midfield
Playmaker who coached Lazio in 2002 and later led Manchester City to the Premier League title.

Matias Almeyda
Centre midfield
Argentinian who began and ended his career at River Plate. Now coach of Banfield in his homeland.

Pavel Nedved
Left midfield
A huge talent in Serie A, the Czech was voted *World Soccer's* Player of the Year in 2003.

Marcelo Salas
Forward
Tough, resilient and fearless in front of goal, Lazio paid River Plate £12m for the Chilean in 1998.

Christian Vieri
Forward
He became the world's most expensive player when sold to Inter in 1999 for £32m.

NEXT MONTH SEPTEMBER ISSUE ON SALE SEPT 9

BERGKAMP
10
Arsenal
Candy
AMIGA
SONY
MiniDisc
ORIGINAL
CLASSICS
CANTONA
7
CLASSIC FOOTBALL SHIRTS.CO.UK
TWITTER.COM/
CLASSICSHIRTS
FACEBOOK.COM/
CLASSICFOOTBALLSHIRTS
CLEARANCE
£9.99
FC LUZERN
11 HOME
£12.99
QATAR 08 HOME
£14.99
ROSENBORG
12 HOME
REMA
1000
£14.99
FAR RABAT
13 HOME
NEW
PLAYER
ISSUE STOCK
GERMANY TECHFIT
12 HOME
SPAIN
FORMOTION
12 HOME
SCOTLAND TECHFIT
11 HOME
£6.99
ANDERLECHT 12
ADIDAS BEANIE
£19.99
ASTON VILLA
MACRON PADDED
BOMBER JACKET
£5.99
CARTAGENA AWAY
SHORTS
£14.99
SHAKHTAR
DONETSK NIKE
WOVEN TRAINING
PANTS
£7.99
LIVERPOOL WARRIOR
13 REVERSIBLE BEANIE
£4.99
GERMANY AWAY SOCKS
£4.99
BENFICA HOME SOCKS
£6.99
GERMANY ADIDAS
SUPPORTERS
SCARF
£13.99
AJAX AWAY SHORTS
CLASSIC FOOTBALL SHIRTS
Boots
£39.99

PRO-DIRECT
the professional's choice

PRO PERSONALISATION
BOOT iD
PRO-DIRECT MAKE IT YOURS

EXPRESS
NEXT DAY DELIVERY

PRO-DIRECT SOCCER PRESENTS

pitch black collection

Embrace the classic and roll with the modern in the adidas Pitch Black Collection. Featuring the Adizero F50, Predator, Nitrocharge and 11Pro, you'll become deadly in the dark.

SEE THE FULL PITCH BLACK COLLECTION INCLUDING JUNIORS ONLINE - PRICES FROM £28

ADIZERO
FROM £30

PREDATOR
FROM £32

EXCLUSIVE

NITROCHARGE
FROM £32

11PRO
FROM £28

WWW.PRODIRECTSOCCER.COM